

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08234565 7

# THE RIVALS OF THE TRAIL



LAWRENCE J. LESLIE



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/rivalsoftrail00lesl>

# THE RIVALS OF THE TRAIL

BY

LAWRENCE J. LESLIE



M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY

CHICAGO

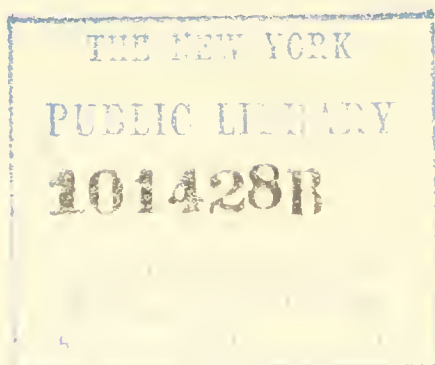
::

NEW YORK

219135

7

WAS



COPYRIGHT, 1918 BY  
THE NEW YORK BOOK COMPANY

Made in U. S. A.



# THE RIVALS OF THE TRAIL.

## CHAPTER I.

### UNDER THE SPREADING OAK.

“HOLD up, Toby Jucklin; we might as well settle the thing right here and now, under the shade of this bully old big tree!”

“S-s-say, S-s-steve Dowdy, I tell you I did s-s-see that heading on the l-l-letter Ted got out of the m-m-mails; and it was from the b-b-biggest buyers of m-m-medicine roots in the w-w-whole country, too. It had g-g-g-g——”

“Hold on, Toby; give a whistle and quiet down. When you get excited you just can’t do anything but hiss and get red in the face. Whistle *three* times, and make sure of it. It gives me a pain to see you look like that, sure thing.”

The boy addressed, and who seemed to answer to the name of Toby Jucklin, evidently knew that the advice was good. Strange to say, when he began to stutter at a tremendous rate, if he only remembered himself, drew up short, and gave a whistle, it seemed to clear the obstruction to his free speech.

So now he went through the ridiculous performance, and with a grin actually managed to utter a complete sentence without once stammering.

"I say it had the one word 'ginseng' in big letters at the top of the page; get that, Steve?"

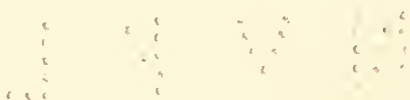
"Sure I do," replied the other, who was a rather fiery fellow, good-natured in his way, but so peppery that his chums had long since dubbed him "Touch-and-go-Steve"; "and it sounds like Ted hasn't been as much asleep all this while as we had an idea."

"Y-y-you just b-b-bet he ain't," asserted the first speaker, shaking his head as if deep down in his heart he feared the boy in question about as much as he disliked him.

"Ginseng, eh?" muttered Steve; "I've heard a whole lot about that plant; seems to me they dry the roots, and pretty much all of it is sent over to China, where the slant-eyed heathen use it for some sort of medicine. Brings a big price, too, the account I read in a magazine went on. Say, I take back all I said about you being on the wrong track, Toby."

"Huh! I r-r-reckon you b-b-better," grinned the other, amiably.

"I've heard our chum Owen Hastings speak about ginseng, when we first got that idea in our heads of trying out the mussels in the Big Sunflower River, to see if they had any fresh-water pearls in 'em."



"They did, too!" exclaimed Toby, without any hesitation, and a ring of triumph in his boyish tones.

"Say, they did, all right," continued Steve, also smiling broadly; "but as I was saying, I remember Owen and his cousin Max talking it over, and wondering whether we could find a paying patch or so of wild ginseng around Carson. So far as I know it's never been hunted much about this region. But you see, we hit up with such bully good success in the pearl business, that it just knocked the other right out of our chums' heads."

"P'r'aps that m-m-measly old Ted was hanging around, and heard w-w-what was s-s-said about the g-g-g——"

"Ginseng!" roared Steve, afraid that his companion might have a fit in the endeavor to get that particular word, which somehow twisted up his vocal cords worse than anything he tried to say.

"That's it," cried the other, triumphantly. "P'r'aps Ted heard about it, and g-g-got his crowd out in the w-w-woods huntin' for the p-p-plant. Must 'a' f-f-found a bunch of it, too."

"Go slow now, Toby, and get the thing straight," cautioned Steve. "You just rush along like an old hurricane. No wonder you get tumbling all over yourself."

"C-c-couldn't b-b-beat you if I t-t-tried," burst out the other, indignantly.

"Well," drawled Steve, with a smirk, "that's a

fact, I am a little quick on the trigger, and go off before I had ought to, lots of times; but then you see, I c'n speak straight, and it don't matter much. But to get down to business again, don't you remember Bandy-legs telling us a week or more ago that he saw Ted down at the railroad station, and he was folding up a bill of lading like he'd been shipping something out? We talked it over at the time, and allowed Ted h'd been sending his old wheel to the factory to get it japanned over again."

"But now we know b-b-better!" ejaculated Toby, puffing out his cheeks in the effort to talk with as little stumbling as possible. "It wasn't his w-w-wheel 'tall, but a package of—you know what, Steve!"

"That was real cute of you, Toby, getting around the rocks like you did," remarked the admiring Steve. "Best to always avoid trouble, when you can. It comes more'n halfway to meet a feller mostly, anyhow. Yes, ten to one it was a bundle of dried ginseng roots Ted Shafter was sending away. And if they've been doing this same right along, and struck a soft thing—say, old boy, they may get their motorcycles as soon as our crowd does!"

The two boys looked at each other when Steve made this stunning announcement. It was a matter that concerned them deeply. And to fully understand why, it might be as well for us right here to go back, ascertain who Steve and Toby were,



and also what relation they bore to the other boys mentioned in their little talk under the wide spreading tree that cast such a pleasant shade on this hot day.

They lived in the little town of Carson, located in a Northern State on the very pretty Evergreen River, which in turn was formed by the junction of two smaller streams known as the Elder and the Big Sunflower.

At the beginning of the long summer vacation five lads, who were great friends, had banded themselves together under the name of the "Outing Boys of Carson." They had quite extensive plans of what they would like to do in company; but in the beginning a terrible lack of funds threw cold water over these ambitious schemes.

But the two cousins, Max and Owen Hastings, conceived a glorious idea that promised at least a shadowy chance for success. They believed that as pearls of considerable value had been found in many of the streams in Indiana and other middle Western States, a search among the mussels that were known to lie plentifully along the Big Sunflower might result in their securing a prize or two.

Accordingly these four, with another boy, called "Bandy-legs" on account of the fact of his lower extremities being a bit short, and with a slight curve, after the style of a Western cowboy—these five had gone camping up in the region of the Big



Sunflower, and met with astonishing success from the start.

They had secured a number of very fine pearls, as well as others not so valuable. But the supply of fresh-water clams, known among the natives as mussels, was presently exhausted; and, after quite a lively time, as set down in a previous story, the Outing Boys had returned home to Carson, where their find created the utmost excitement.

Mr. Rollins, the editor of the *Carson Weekly Town Topics*, had interviewed Max and printed quite an account of the new discovery in his paper. Quite a few letters had been received from jewelers who had read the story, copied in the city papers, and offers were even made for the pearls.

In the end, the father of Max, Mr. Hastings, with whom Owen, being an orphan, also lived, went to the city and negotiated a sale for just *two* of the pearls. They had turned out even more precious than any of the boys had believed possible. And in the amount received for two out of the five fine ones, there were ample funds for the boys to send away for the longed-for motorcycles, of which they had been so long dreaming.

The streams around Carson were being daily scoured by eager pearl hunters; but, strange to say, not a single gem worth mentioning had as yet been discovered. It appeared as though the Outing Boys had monopolized the entire plant during

that short time they were in camp on the Big Sunflower.

Now they were expecting the arrival of the machines any day, and consequently there was a fever running the rounds in four separate homes of Carson.

Ted Shafter had long been the recognized bully of the neighborhood. He was a big, hulking fellow, whose reputation was not of the best. But naturally he had a following of his own, fellows who basked in the sunlight of his presence, and were ever ready to do his bidding in order to curry his favor.

Two of these boys went by the names of Amiel Toots and Shack Beggs. Let it be enough to say right here that they were only smaller specimens of Ted Shafter himself. Given the chance, either of them would have developed into the same kind of shiftless bully that Ted had long been known to be, a nuisance to the neighbors, and a terror in their own families.

Toby, after all, was the first to break the long silence that had followed the announcement of Steve about the motorcycles.

“G-g-good g-g-gracious!” he stammered, “s-s-say, wouldn’t it be terrible now, if they w-w-went and got the same make of w-w-wheel as we have?”

“Oh, I don’t know!” replied Steve, reflectively. “Chances are they’d get into a peck of trouble right away with an engine to run. Much any or that

crowd knows about valves, cylinders, exhaust, compression, pistons, cams, carburetor, connecting rods and all them things connected with an up-to-date motorcycle."

Toby looked at his comrade while he so glibly reeled all these words off, as if he would give a great deal to be able to speak so rapidly without tripping once.

"B-b-but p'r'aps they've b-b-been studyin' up, same's we have," he managed to say. "You know none of us, 'cept Max, knew the f-f-first thing about machinery till lately, S-s-steve!"

"Oh, rats!" snorted the other, with a derisive shake of his head; "there ain't one out of that bunch would bother his head studying *anything*; and you know it, Toby Jucklin."

"Y-y-yes, that's so, S-s-steve," assented the other; and then added triumphantly, "b-b-but don't forget S-s-shack Beggs' daddy is an engineer up at the works!"

"Sure thing; and pretty cute of you remembering the same," admitted Steve, who, in spite of his impetuous ways, was easily convinced when he had made a mistake, and ever ready to own up. "Guess Shack must 'a' sorter inherited some of his dad's machine instincts then. I remember now he did fix up that broken automobile that went into the ditch, and got a whole dollar from the man that was hurt when she took the dip."

"E-b-better be g-g-getting along, hadn't we, S-s-

steve? Might f-f-find Bandy-legs over at the H-h-hastings h-h-house!"

"Say, won't it be fun though to see old Bandy-legs mount his motorcycle!" grinned Steve, as though the very thought gave him pleasure. "I remember what a tough time he had getting a bike to fit him, with his short legs. He was mighty particular about writing out his directions, I took notice. If they send him just an ordinary machine what could be done to make it fit, d'ye think, Toby?"

"P-p-pull his legs, that's all!" spluttered the other, also grinning.

"Well, we've threatened to do that for him lots of times, but somehow never just got up steam enough to make a start. But the chance may be closer at hand than any of us think. Say, I c'n hardly wait till they come. Never slept a wink last night for thinkin' about what glorious times we five chums expect to have this summer and early fall. Gee, but that was a lucky think about the pearl racket!"

"Just g-g-great!" agreed Toby, beginning to take off his coat; it's a h-h-hot walk over to H-h-hastings', and what's the use k-k-keeping our c-c-coats on, I'd like to know?"

"Good idea, Toby, and I'll follow suit," remarked Steve.

He had just started to get one arm out of the



sleeve, when he gave utterance to a sudden loud cry.

“Look out there, Toby! Jump out of the way, you silly!”

The startled Toby instead of obeying stood still as though his muscles might be bound in the same way his organs of speech were whenever he became in the least excited. And before he could even turn his eyes upward, to see what had given his companion this alarming symptom of panic, something big and weighty came dropping down out of the bushy depths of the oak, to fall full upon Toby, and bear him in a desperately struggling heap to the ground, where he lay kicking and shouting in a half-strangled way.



## CHAPTER II.

### A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"HELP! help! t-t-take it off, S-s-steve!" roared Toby, as he flung himself about in a desperate effort to shake off the unknown terror that had come down upon his back, flattening him out very much after the manner of a "pancake," as his companion afterwards declared.

But somehow Steve did not seem particularly anxious to lend a helping hand. He was doubled up with laughter, which doubtless the alarmed Toby considered particularly mean of Steve until he heard a familiar voice call out in his ear:

"Goin' to pull my legs out, hey? Want to get busy right away now while you've got a good chance, Toby Jucklin! Just grab hold, and try, if you dare! When I heard you say that, I just made up my mind I'd give you something to start things goin'. So I dropped off the limb where I've been lyin' all this while, listenin' to you two poor babes in the wood talk and tell all your secrets. Say, what if it'd been one of the Ted Shafter bunch now? Mebbe they wouldn't 'a' heard some interestin' news right easy! You *are* a pair of innocents, sure

enough. Wonder what Max an' Owen'll think when I tell 'em how easy I caught two of the wide-awake Outing Boys napping!"

"S-s-say, get off'n me, B-b-bandy-legs!" gasped Toby, panting dreadfully. "Don't you know you k-k-knocked near all the w-w-wind out of me, comin' d-d-down like a thousand of b-b-brick? Yank him off, S-s-steve, won't you, please? I'm lying right now on a b-b-big root that sticks me in the r-r-ribs!"

The boy who had been hiding in the oak and listening to all his chums had to say, condescended to get up without any assistance on the part of Steve, who, to tell the truth, was chuckling so tremendously over the ludicrous performance that he did not seem capable of exerting himself in any way.

"Now, we'll call it quits if you say so," remarked Bandy-legs, with a grin, as if desirous of ending the affair without further contest.

"How'd you ever come to be hiding up there; that's what I want to know?" demanded Steve.

"Saw you two coming with your heads close together, and so busy talkin' that you never glimpsed me when I climbed up and waited," replied the other, pleasantly; for Bandy-legs was a pretty good all-around fellow, with a few weak points, but well liked by his chums and the boys of Carson in general, all except the Shafter crowd.

"But how'd you ever know we was going to stop under this blessed old oak?" went on Steve; and

Toby seemed content to let his comrade do the talking for both just then, as he was still gasping for breath, and feeling of his sore rib.

"Didn't know you would, but I reckoned you'd pass under, and I could give a whoop so's to scare you out of a year's growth," the third boy remarked.

"Looky here, was you on the way to the Hastings house?" demanded Steve.

"Just what I was," grinned Bandy-legs, brushing off some dirt that had gathered on his clothes from his scuffle on the ground under the tree.

"You heard what we talked about, of course?" Steve continued.

"Say, you talked loud enough for anybody as deaf as old Adam Hoofnagle to ketch every word," Bandy-legs asserted. "Want to learn to tone down your conversation if you ever expect to make good Outing Boys. Max says they never tell the whole neighborhood all they know."

"Shucks! think you're some punkins just because you played that little joke on us, don't you, now?" remarked Steve. "We'll get it back on you sooner or later, eh, Toby?"

"You just b-b-bet we w-w-will!" assented the stammering boy, nodding eagerly, as he continued to rub his bruises, which he felt he could lay at the door of the said Bandy-legs, to be repaid with compound interest at the first opportunity.

"But you don't seem to be much surprised about

learning what Ted and his crowd's been a-doing?" remarked Steve.

"Ain't!" answered the other, laconically.

"Did you know something about that ginseng business, and been keepin' it quiet-like, all this time?" asked Steve, indignantly.

"Nixy, not a blessed thing," replied Bandy-legs, anxious to free himself from all suspicion of playing his comrades double; "never knew ginseng could be found around Carson till I heard you two fellers blowing about it. But there *was* something I was carryin' over to Max and Owen hot-speed, when I glimpsed you two, and got the idea to join the crowd. Then I climbed up, and sprawled out on that lower limb you can see just above your heads. What happened later no need of my telling. Toby knows."

"Some news you had run across, you mean to say, and which you thought the rest of our crowd ought to know?" Steve went on, excitedly. "Then let's hear it now. You wouldn't be so mean as to try and keep us guessing all the way to Hastings'?"

"Oh, well, guess you might as well hear it now as later on!" remarked Bandy-legs, in a drawling tone, expressly assumed in order to excite and annoy his companions.

"G-g-get a m-m-move on you, please!" groaned Toby.

"Just *what* do you know?" demanded Steve, making an aggressive movement with his doubled-



up hand, to indicate that his patience was nearly exhausted.

“They’ve come!”

As Bandy-legs uttered these two words Steve and Toby almost fell into each other’s arms, such was their emotion.

“Listen to that, would you, Toby; he means our motorcycles have arrived!” cried the impetuous one, as he gripped his companion’s hand and wrung it fiercely, as though it might be a pump handle in some dairyman’s back yard.

“G-g-great!” was all poor Toby could give utterance to; but his face was eloquent enough, as an expansive grin spread over it.

“How d’ye know?” asked Steve, a little cautiously, as though he had a sudden fear that Bandy-legs might only be guessing.

“Saw ’em with my own eyes—looked like a whole car full of machines, too. I had a chance to see that there were five addressed to Mr. Hastings; and that looks like every fellow, even Toby here, had got his, all right.”

“Great news you’re telling us, Bandy-legs!” declared Steve. “Let’s get a hustle on right away, find the other boys, and go down to claim our baggage. Gee, I just can’t hardly believe it! All these months I’ve been wishing I’d ever own a real motorcycle of my own, and here it’s come true. Seems like some old wizard must ’a’ been playin’ with us fellers.”



"Owen did it with his little scheme for hunting pearls," declared Bandy-legs, generously; while Toby nodded assent, as he often did when desirous of keeping still.

"What was that you meant about a whole car full of machines, Bandy-legs?" asked Steve, as the trio started off at a fast pace, regardless of the hot sun's rays.

"Just what I said; there were more machines than our'n in that car," the other replied, immediately.

"Just how many, now?" demanded Steve, suspiciously.

"Huh! let's see—yep, there was *three!*" Bandy-legs replied.

"Three, eh? That might mean Ted Shafter and his cronies, Amiel Toots and Shack Beggs! Say, didn't you just have a *little* bit of curiosity, now, Bandy-legs, so's to peek, and see who the other machines were comin' to?"

"What d'ye take me for?" answered the other. "Think I'd let such a bully good chance as that slip past, when Max is all the time telling us to keep our eyes and ears open if we want to make good Outing Boys? Course I peeked at the cards."

"Who were they coming to then?" pursued Steve.

"You hit the nail on the head, all right, first clip," grinned the other.

"Ted Shafter getting three machines the same

time we do! Well, will wonders ever let up? They went and did it, same as we fellers; only 'stead of finding a lot of dandy pearls, that bunch went and dug up ginseng root at this time of year, and sold it to a big drug and root house in the city. I never would have believed that Ted Shafter had it in him, and that's a fact. And it all goes to show you, fellers, that he's a dangerous customer, once he gets his back up. Say, won't Max and Owen just stare when they hear all we've got to tell?"

"Whew!" was all that Toby allowed himself to say, for he was so excited that he really feared for the result if he tried to give full utterance to his feelings.

The three boys continued to push along until presently they arrived at the Hastings home. Without ceremony they entered a side door, and ascended to a den up in the top story, which the two cousins used as a sort of workshop, and where they could usually be found, when not studying in their room, or out.

Sure enough, both of them were at work, and at sight of the happy faces of their three chums they readily anticipated the pleasant news that was being brought.

Both the Hastings boys were bright, wide-awake young chaps. Max had had some experience as a woodsman, and knew considerable of the secrets of the great outdoors. His cousin was a great reader, and could tell things without number; but

they were only known to him by theory, and not practice.

Between them, however, they made a team that promised to prove of great value to the Outing Club during their various expeditions awheel or afoot.

Of course, after the great news had been communicated, Max and Owen were just as wild as their chums to hasten back to the railroad station, and claim their property.

"Come on, boys," said the impatient Steve; "let's be on the jump! P'r'aps that Ted Shafter might see our game, and go us one better. I wouldn't put it past his meanness to stick a knife blade into a tire, if he got the chance!"

"T-t-tell me about t-t-that!" exclaimed Toby, indignantly, as he hurried along in the wake of his comrades.

"Oh, I hardly think Ted would start trouble so soon by doing that," remarked Max, over his shoulder. "I rather reckon he's planning to bother us in another way, after we all get the hang of our machines. There'll be plenty of chances to do it, I suppose."

"Whoo-ee! Think of what a racket there's going to be around old Carson pretty soon, when eight motorcycles get to puffing and snorting for all they're worth!" exclaimed Steve.

"Listen to him, would you, boys!" remarked Bandy-legs. "To hear Steve talk you'd think each

one of these machines was a regular wildcat locomotive, calculated to go rearing and tearing up and down the pikes around Carson, a-scarin' all the farmers' hosses half to death; and even jumpin' fences on occasion when they felt fit!"

"Oh, come off!" snorted Steve, in reply, while Max, laughing, went on to say: "Well, now, I reckon there *will* be some pretty lively times around these regions from now on. Eight wide-awake fellows mounted on new machines ought to wake things up. And I know the girls will admire us when we show them what great stunts we'll soon be able to do on our new motorcycles, boys."

"Particularly Mazie Dunkirk," remarked Owen, with an uplifting of his eyebrows; for the girl he referred to was said to be the prettiest young miss around Carson, and one in whom the said Max felt a decided interest. "Because I heard her say only yesterday that she did think it too mean that motorcycles were not made for two; and that her papa had declared no daughter of his should ever be seen on such a dangerous contraption."

"Huh! Bandy-legs' sister, Sis Griffin, don't feel that way; because I heard her say she expected Owen here to give her many a little ride," remarked Steve.

"P-p-p'r'aps some other g-g-girls might be influenced to t-t-take a r-r-ride, too!" Toby blurted out.



"Sure," said Steve, without blushing; "I've fixed all that long ago; and just you make up your mind, Toby, that when Bessie French *does* go out on a motorcycle, she's going to choose one that don't wobble, and hesitate, and get all twisted up."

"That's mean! Shame on you, Steve!" observed Max.

"Oh, well, I didn't want to say anything low-down, and Toby knows it; but then you understand, boys, he *does* get rattled easy in his actions as well as his talk, and a girl's life is too valuable to be risked more than is necessary. Get my meaning, don't you, Toby, and no ill feeling, I hope?"

"S-s-shucks!" was all the other would say, for they were by this time drawing near the buildings marking the railroad station, and presently they would be feasting their eyes on the precious motorcycles.

"Show us the car, Bandy-legs!" said Max.

"Yes, lead us into it right away; we'll just blow up and bust if we hold off any longer!" Steve went on—"Touch-and-go-Steve," always impatient.

"Here it is, fellers, right alongside; fact is, I marked the door with my red chalk so's I could easy know it again. Step right inside and take a look!" cried Bandy-legs, as he led the way through the open door of the car.

In another minute the five boys were staring around them. There seemed some reason for con-



sternation; because, instead of their eyes falling upon the precious motorcycles in their crates, as described so glowingly by Bandy-legs, they found themselves looking only upon the interior of an empty car!

## CHAPTER III.

### READY FOR BUSINESS.

"THEY'VE hooked our machines!" cried Steve Dowdy, angrily.

"Oh, thunder! what's this mean?" exclaimed the amazed Bandy-legs, as he stared around at the empty car in dismay, and then rubbed his eyes, as though he fancied he must be dreaming.

"They woudn't be so m-m-mean as to d-d-do that, would they, M-m-max?" queried Toby, who also looked faint at the terrible prospect of losing their precious motorcycles before they had even feasted their eyes upon the machines.

"Mean!" echoed testy Steve, quickly and ferociously; "I wouldn't put anything past that Ted Shafter. If he had the chance he'd drop the whole five into the Evergreen River and let 'em go to the bottom kerplunk!"

"Max, tell us what you think, please?" asked Bandy-legs, pleadingly.

"Why, it's as plain as anything," replied the other, who was even half smiling at the alarm some of the boys exhibited; "they've been taken from the car since you were here, Bandy-legs. And in-

stead of Ted and his fellows doing the job, the chances are some of the freight handlers here have emptied the car, so it could be hitched on to the first train going to the city. Fact is, fellows, I think I had a squint at the crates inside the freight house as we passed the door right now."

"Come on!" shouted Steve, as he turned like lightning and made a break for the open door in question.

A minute later and they were standing alongside five crates that could be seen held the long-looked-for motorcycles.

Steve began fumbling at once with one crate, as though he could not hold his impatience to handle the contents in check.

"Wait up, Steve," laughed Max. "Nothing doing here, you know. First thing is to hunt up Tom Snooks and hire his two teams to carry these things to our back yard, where we can get busy opening the crates."

"Right you are, Max, and I'll run out and find him, if you say so," Steve went on to remark, always ready to do anything he was told.

"I saw him around the corner of the building; so skip along with you," Max remarked.

"Be q-q-q-q—!" Toby started to call out.

"Quick—I will, sure," the other replied over his shoulder, as if to help Toby out of his trouble that was threatening to swamp the poor fellow.

"Looky, boys, that must be the three other ma-

chines over yonder," remarked Owen, pointing as he spoke.

Naturally the four boys stepped over to take a look. And as they were bending down to make sure that the tags read, "Mr. Theodore Shafter," a harsh voice just behind remarked:

"Just you fellers get up and dust out of that, now! Reckon you'd like to rip a tire, or do some-thin' mean like that, wouldn't yuh, now? Huh! thought you'd be the only crowd around Carson to own motorcycles, didn't yuh? Looks like you ain't the on'y pebbles on the beach now, don't it, hey? We knowed how to rake up the spondulicks as well as you did. Ginseng pays right smart, nigh as well as pearls, when yuh knows where to hunt for it. Now clear out, an' keep your measly fingers off'n our machines, d'ye hear?"

Of course it was Ted Shafter, and his two shadows, Amiel and Shack, were along with him; both grinning as though they were delighted to hear their burly leader express himself in this taunting and insulting way.

Max only smiled as he answered the other.

"We were only looking at your crated machines, Ted. You sure have sprung a big surprise on all of us, because up to now we never dreamed what you were doing. If you did earn all that money digging ginseng, it does you credit."

"Huh, what business is it of yours, Max Hastings, where we got the money?" growled the other, sus-



piciously; although Max was not conscious of having hinted that there could be anything wrong in the way the means for purchasing the three expensive machines had been obtained.

"Say, Ted, that Steve Dowdy must 'a' gone tuh get Tom Snooks, the expressman," remarked Shack, just then; at which the leader grinned widely.

"They'll have to wait till we gets done with Snooks, then," he observed, with a sneer; "'cause I made a bargain with him to take these things out right off; and here he comes now with his helper. Stand aside for your betters, Max Hastings, and don't bother us, d'ye hear?"

He hustled up to Max as he spoke, and it looked as though he meant to put out a hand to hasten the change of base he demanded. Max looked him coolly in the eye, and did not move an inch. It was as though he dared the bully to as much as lay a finger on him. And after glaring at him for a dozen seconds Ted simply shrugged his shoulders, and with a grunt turned to the expressman.

"There are others besides Tom Snooks, and perhaps we may not care to wait till you get through with him, Ted," remarked Max, quietly, as he walked toward the door of the freight house.

"Ye'll find Larry Hazen out there, Max!" called Tom Snooks; "he's me own cousin, an' it'll be all in the fambly, you see. Give him a chanct to carry home yer stuff. He'll do it to the king's taste, belave me."

“Shut up, Tom!” Ted was heard to growl.

Larry was found and he soon set to work, with the assistance of the willing lads. The motorcycles were loaded on two separate trucks, being exceedingly heavy in themselves. Long before the last of the five was thus secured, Ted and his cronies had gone away with their possessions. And the last look they gave the Outing Boys was one of sneering triumph.

Max realized that this singular happening that gave the Shafter crowd machines similar to their own was bound to bring about more or less exciting situations in the near future. But then Max was not the one to allow himself to fall into a condition where he would borrow trouble. Time enough to look out for it when it came along; though they might be on their guard all the same, so as not to be caught unawares and napping.

This procession passing through the streets of quiet Carson, accompanied by five happy-faced boys, attracted considerable attention. Many people knew all about the designs of Max and his chums. They had heard the exciting story of how the pearls were found up on the Big Sunflower River, and knew that Mr. Hastings had sold a couple of them for a large sum, just how much no one seemed to be able to say.

And it was also pretty generally understood that the Outing Boys expected to buy modern motorcycles with a part of the proceeds of their splendid

find; so that the news passed quickly along that the machines had arrived, and in a short time they could expect to hear of all sorts of accidents.

Once the crates were landed in the back yard at the Hastings home, and the carters paid for their trouble, Max and Owen brought out hammers, hatchets and all sorts of tools calculated to expedite the tearing apart of the coverings.

"Be mighty careful, boys," cautioned Max, fearing least the impulsive Steve, in his eagerness to get at the interior of the crate he was working on, might injure the contents of the heavy framework. "Take it easy, everybody. We've got the rest of the day ahead of us, so there's no hurry. If you happen to do any damage you'll just have to watch the rest of us have a grand time, while you're waiting for the new part to come along."

"Yes," grunted Toby, who was working almost as fast as Steve, yet would not admit the fact, "h-h-haste m-m-makes w-w-waste, they say."

"Well," remarked Steve, positively, "no danger of your ever getting in trouble that way, with your talk, Toby, I guess."

"Look at Max, he's got his done first after all!" burst out Bandy-legs.

"Just because he knew how to go at it and didn't fizzle, like the rest of us," laughed Owen, good-naturedly.

However, in a very short time they had all succeeded in getting the crates removed, and stood back



to admire the bright colors of the five motorcycles, brand-new from the factory, and seeming to just invite the proud owners to hasten matters, so they could be off upon their first little ride.

There was no end of things to be done, though, before this pleasant task could be attended to. Max had to answer hosts of anxious questions, and pass around, lending assistance to his distressed chums when they found themselves unable to just comprehend how each nut and bolt had to be put into place.

Of course the machines had been shipped in as complete condition as possible, but there were many things that required looking after before they could be pronounced in working order.

It was nearly half-past eleven before the entire five had been completely set up, and the boys could not keep from expressing their ardent admiration as they walked up and down the line, comparing notes.

“Are we certain that every fellow has found his right machine?” asked Max.

“They were all marked with our numbers, just as we gave them in,” replied Owen.

“One thing sure,” remarked Steve, “Toby knows his, all right. It’d give any of the rest of us a cramp in the legs if we tried to double up on that short-cranked camel-back machine.”

“R-r-rats! You’re j-j-just envious of my red one, that’s all!” Toby sent back at the scoffer; for he



was so delighted to find that his short shift had been provided for by the makers of the motorcycles, that he had been in the saddle as many as a dozen times already.

“Now, what say, shall we get out the gasoline and see how they work?” asked Steve Dowdy.

They had all been industriously studying up on the subject ever since coming back from their successful pearl hunt; and each believed that theoretically he had everything connected with a modern motorcycle down to a fine point. Just how it would come out in actual practice was another thing. No doubt they must go through the troubles that beset all new riders, and learn by way of experience how to manage.

“Might as well, before we go home for lunch,” Bandy-legs went on. “So far as I’m concerned, I don’t feel as if I could eat one single bite though, I’m that happy and excited!”

“Toby’s going to stay with us and have a snack,” remarked Max, quietly, and at this the other flashed him a look full of thanks.

Toby Jucklin lived with an old uncle, who was looked upon as a sort of stingy miser and begrudged the boy any pleasure. As yet Nathan Jucklin had not been told of the great good luck that had befallen his nephew in conjunction with the other four lads of Carson. He went out very seldom, and had little communication with the rest of the community.

Toby was really afraid of what his crusty old uncle would say and do when he found the nerve to bring his splendid new motorcycle home. He actually feared lest in his anger at having so much good money "foolishly squandered," as he would term it, Nathan might damage the wheel in some way, or try and sell it; as he might claim he had a right to do, being the guardian of the boy.

And secretly Toby was resolved to coax Max to allow him to keep the machine at his house until he knew how things were going at home.

The gasoline being brought, and some placed carefully in the tanks made to hold the same, Max, warning his chums at the time *never* under any circumstances to be the least bit lax in keeping fire away from the magazines, one of the motors was started, the metal rest allowing the rear wheel to revolve unrestricted.

As the motor began to pop away and then the wheel to spin in a bewildering fashion, the boys stood there in a circle, almost holding their very breaths in happiness.

Doubtless each fellow mentally pictured himself flying along over dusty roads and covering the miles in rapid order, so that the horses that were passed almost seemed to be standing still.

In turn, then, each machine was tested out and all found to work in a way that quite won the hearts of their proud owners.

"This afternoon, then, we'll have our first lessons,"

announced Max, who, as the leader of the Outing Boys, was given authority to arrange such things as were considered really necessary. And so heartily was Max liked by his mates, and in such respect was his opinion held, that seldom was there the least sign of anything like rebellion in the camp.

“Huh, thought I’d be able to run over home on my new mount this noon and surprise the natives!” grumbled Steve; “but I reckon you’re right, Max. I don’t want to be in too rushing a hurry, and get smashed up in the start. But I’m going to ride home to my supper on it, you understand?”

“No reason you shouldn’t, if all’s well,” remarked Max, laughingly. “Come, get a move on you, Bandy-legs. Did you bring your old wheel along?”

“Wheel?” snorted the other, indignantly; “me ride a common old bike after this? Why, I wouldn’t be caught dead on one. Come along, Steve, and we’ll be back in two shakes of a lamb’s tail to try our first little ride. Whoopee! I could fly, I feel so airy-like. Me for grub and back again.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### TOBY CONFIDES IN MAX.

WHEN once more the five boys clustered around their new motorcycles, Max, who had once ridden such an up-to-date wheel when visiting a relative in the city, began to give his chums some further instructions concerning the working of the various parts, particularly how the machine was to be started, and also several ways in which it could be brought to a stop.

They listened attentively and, finally, an hour or so later, Owen started off to take his first little spin, Max having already gone up and down the road in front of the house to show them how easy it was, after they had the secret down to a science.

All of them watched as Owen went at a slow pace and gradually ventured to increase the same after coming around the block twice. In turn Steve, Bandy-legs and Toby made the trail; and, strange to say, without any accident worth mentioning. All of which spoke well for the instructions given them by Max and their care in remembering how to do the various things connected with operating the machines, especially the starting and stopping,



which, after all, were the more essential points for new beginners to know.

"Ain't it just bully, though?" cried Steve, as he came back from his trial spin and fell into the arms of Max as he tried to spring from his saddle too quickly.

"Don't try that way again, or else you'll have the heavy machine falling on top of you," Max warned him; secretly he had more fear concerning Steve than in connection with any of the others, for he knew how the other always wanted to act from impulse, and such a hasty nature often brings trouble down upon his own head.

Of course, it is necessary when running so complicated a piece of machinery as a motorcycle to be always ready to meet an emergency; but that does not mean that one must needs be nervous and quick to make sudden moves.

"Are we getting on as well as you thought, Max?" asked Owen.

"Much better," was the ready reply. "Fact is, fellows, if I didn't know to the contrary, I'd be likely to believe every one of you'd been practicing in secret somewhere and was springing a little surprise on me right now."

"Say, it's nice of you to talk like that, Max," declared Steve, flushing with gratification; for it was not always that he could expect to hear himself complimented by such a cautious chap as the leader,

because he was often in the habit of making mistakes.

"We're getting there right fast," declared Bandy-legs; "how long do you reckon it'll be, Max, before we can take a long hike across country?"

"Why, to-morrow, if the weather says so," answered the other. "You fellows have gone on so well and paid attention to all you've been told, that there's nothing to hinder our making a first trial run to-morrow."

"Bully for that!" burst out Steve, exultantly.

"Ain't it great, though, to think we've all been around a lot of times, and had things work so smooth," Bandy-legs remarked, proudly. "And so many people kept saying nasty things about what was going to happen to us right away."

"Why, even my dad said he would never know a minute's peace from now on, with his only son and heir spinning around the blessed country on a machine that could make more'n a mile a minute."

"Huh, d-d-don't see's anybody could b-b-blame him," snapped Toby, seeing a good chance to get one back at his tormentor.

"But never mind," Steve went on, failing to get his dander up at this thrust, as might have been expected of his quick temper; "I'm going to fool 'em all right. You just wait and see how careful Little Steve will be. P'r'aps I'll prove the last of the bunch to have an accident, eh, Max?"

"You never can tell," was the non-committal re-

sponse of the one addressed; who certainly hoped from the depths of his heart that none of them would speedily fall on evil days and have a leg or arm broken.

They continued to take trial runs as the afternoon drew on apace, extending the circuit as experience gave them more confidence in their powers to control the little but powerful giant given in their charge.

“Wonder how the other fellers are getting on?” Bandy-legs remarked, after he had just returned from going a full mile around, from one road to another, with a lot of people stopping to watch his swift passage, some of the older ones to wag their heads, as though prophesying all manner of bad things, and the young lads to sigh dismally, as they wished Dame Fortune would be as kind to them later on as she seemed to have been to the five Outing Boys.

“That’s an easy one,” observed Owen, smiling.

“Can you guess it?” demanded Steve.

“Listen!”

Owen held up his hand as he uttered this last word, and immediately the others became conscious of a confused rattling sound, as though several quick-firing guns were pouring their hot fire upon an assaulting enemy.

“Wow, that’s them, as sure as shooting!” cried Bandy-legs, excited. “They’ve got on to the stuff



all right, and been off on a long run this very afternoon, don't you forget it!"

Steve turned a reproachful eye on the leader.

"Oh, Max, how could you let them get the bulge on us that way?" he said, sadly. "They'll never get over crowing about it, you mark me."

"Let them crow all they want to," replied the other, sturdily. "I believe in going about my own business and paying no attention to others, who would only laugh themselves sick to see some accident get me. Perhaps they may have got the thing down pat; and, again, you may hear of one of Ted's crowd taking a header into some old ditch that is full of sour water. Queerer things have happened."

"But they're going to pass this place just to give us the laugh, don't you know; and it galls me like fun to see the ugly grin that will come on Ted's face," the impulsive one continued.

"There's a way to take the sting out of their intended act," declared Max.

"Tell us quick, then, because here they come, one, two, three, strung out along the road in a cloud of dust and hitting up the pace like all get-out," Bandy-legs remarked, eagerly.

"All right," Max went on. "When Ted gets about opposite us, and before he can do as much as shout out one of his nasty cutting remarks, every fellow swing his hat, and give him a cheer. Take my word for it; he won't know what to do. It'll



knock the stuffing right out of him. And give the same salute as the others fly past. They've done mighty well, and it never pays to think too little of your enemy. Ready, now!"

None of the other four were given a chance to say what they thought of this remarkable plan, on the part of their leader, for drawing the venom from a foeman's sting. Ted, on his new motorcycle, was rushing down toward them. The hulking bully was squatted in his saddle, and looked like a big toad. He was watching them out of the corner of his eye as he steered along in the middle of the road. Possibly Ted judged others from his own way of doing things and had a little suspicion that one of these others might attempt to throw him, regardless of consequences.

Suddenly Max whipped off his hat with a cheer, and every one of his four comrades followed suit, being virtually carried off their feet by this strange suggestion Max had sprung upon them. Perhaps Steve and Bandy-legs hardly liked it at all, but they fell in with the rest.

Ted actually flinched, as though he thought they were about to throw a shower of stones at him. He came near losing his grip, but managed to recover and continued racing along the road amid a rattling volley from his exhaust.

But he never as much as opened his mouth to say a single word. For the moment the daring and scur-

rilous tongue of the town bully was mute. Max had drawn his fangs, as it were, for the time being.

And so it was when first Shack Beggs and then Amiel Toots swept past; each being greeted with a generous cheer that ought to have made them less bitter toward the Outing Boys. But only scowls answered the salute. Neither Shack nor Amiel could appreciate the fine sentiment that had caused Max to receive them in this fashion, giving them due credit for having so readily mastered the secret of riding their new machines successfully.

"That's what we get for going more'n halfway to meet 'em," grumbled Steve, after the last of the trio had vanished down the pike in a cloud of dust.

"Well, it didn't hurt us any, and must have surprised Ted more'n a little," remarked Max. "Long ago I made up my mind that the best way to deal with a fellow of his stamp was to just puzzle him! He looks to be met with abuse, and sometimes hard knocks. It's his own kind, you know. Now, when you can *mix him up*, and get him to guessing, you undermine his regular plans of campaign."

"Hey, what you been reading lately, Max?" demanded Bandy-legs.

"I know," burst out Toby, eagerly, and actually forgetting to stammer a particle. "It's 'The Life of Napoleon.' And he's taking pattern from the great commander, too, I tell you."

"Listen to Toby, would you!" exclaimed Steve;

“he got all that off with never a slip. That’s the first good effect of owning a motorcycle, boys.”

At that there was a general laugh, even Toby taking part.

“If it’s going to cure Toby of stuttering,” observed Owen, “there’s hope for the rest of the crowd. Every fellow just think of his weakest point and make up his mind he’s going in for a remedy.”

“Must be a sort of what they call heroic treatment,” declared Max, “seeing that it’s either kill or cure! But are you going home now, Steve and Bandy-legs?” since the two were making preparations for mounting again, and the sun was sinking low in the western sky.

“We’ve had a great day, Max, believe me,” remarked Steve.

“Biggest in all my life,” echoed Bandy-legs. “Hope now I don’t go and make a fool of myself, and take a header just when I get in sight of home. Oh! I’ll go slow enough, Max, never fear; and I reckon it’ll be all right. Only the thing is new to me yet, and a feller *might* get easy rattled, if he thought the dad and mom and Sis were all out watching him come tooting along the road so grand.”

“Think I’ll take the little run with you, Bandy-legs,” remarked Owen, trying not to appear conscious that his companions were winking at one another; for his liking toward Sis Griffin was well known among the boys and girls of Carson—Owen



always took the lively little Griffin girl to barn dances, and he was her company to winter singing school, as well as on skating and sleighing parties.

"Sure, misery likes company," remarked the brother of Sis, with a grin; "if I go into a ditch you'll be handy to yank me out. So-long, Max, I'll be around the first thing to-morrow, with a little pack of grub laid up against our first long run."

The three of them went down the road in a rather sedate manner, leaving Max and Toby together. The former turned toward the sturdy, stuttering lad.

"I rather guess that you hate to take your machine home with you, eh, Toby?" he remarked, with a smile that always won him friends, it was so wholesome.

Toby nodded his head in the affirmative. He seemed to be struggling with some obstacle in his throat that threatened to choke him, and finally managed to say:

"Afraid he might d-d-damage it, you s-s-see, M-m-max. Ain't told him a s-s-single thing about the p-p-pearls, or the buying of the wheel. You k-k-know how mean old Uncle Nathan is. It'd b-b-break my heart if anything h-h-happened to it before I even had one g-g-good spin."

"All right, I wouldn't take chances, then, Toby," declared Max. "You just leave it here as long as you want. Fortunately, when we fixed up a place in the barn to keep the machines, as father told me I



might, we made it plenty big enough for three. So trundle it along, Toby, and it's welcome to stay as long as you please. Yes, I know your Uncle Nathan pretty well; and I wouldn't put it past him to try and sell the machine. Money is what he worships. My father says he's a rich man, and yet see how he lives and how he hates to spend a single cent on you that he can help. I've got no use for the old miser."

"But, Max," said Toby, speaking evenly once more, in a way that surprised his companion, who really wondered if a change was coming about in Toby's affliction, so that he could now and then talk without stuttering at all. "I've never so much as whispered to anybody before; but between you and me I think there's something about Uncle Nathan that he don't want me to know."

"Why, what do you mean, Toby; do you suspect that he's got a good reason for letting you stay with him, when he's threatened ever so many times to make you get out and shift for yourself?"

"That's just it," said Toby, in a mysterious, awe-struck tone. "I saw a paper one day sticking out of his desk and I read part of it. Seemed to me like a copy of a will, and it was signed Ambrose Jucklin, which was my father's name. And, Max, it went on to say something about a whole lot of property that he left to his only son, Tobias. I never read any further, because I heard Uncle shut the front door; but ever since I've been thinking,

always thinking, that perhaps he's not doing the right thing by me. Oh, I wish I knew, I wish I knew! I'd like to live like other boys and have some one to care for me! But he'd never own up, Max; nothing could make Uncle Nathan say there was anything coming to me. Shall I p-p-push my m-m-machine right along in the b-b-barn?"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ADVENTURES OF BANDY-LEGS.

“DON’T be in a hurry, Toby,” Max went on, still standing there outside of the open door of the Hastings barn; “plenty of time, and to spare, before you run over home. I want to hear a little more about this affair of your Uncle Nathan. You don’t mind answering a few questions, I hope?”

“N-n-not at all, M-m-max,” replied the other, his face lighting up with faith.

The poor fellow had kept his secret to himself. All these years when he was suffering at the hands of his miserly old uncle, Toby would not tell a living soul what he went through with. Many times had he been actually hungry, yet he was too proud to betray the fact to any of his playmates, who were so well fed.

And now that something had drawn him to bestow his confidence in Max, he felt just like letting down the bars, once and for all.

“You were not born here, Toby, but your uncle lived here at the time he went away and brought you back a small boy; is that right?” Max continued, shrewdly.

"Yep," replied the other, shortly; because he knew the stuttering habit had seized him again, and he must mince his words.

"Do you know what place you came from?" Max went on.

"A big city—C-c-cincinnati," came the ready reply.

"Oh, is that so? I've been there more'n a few times, Toby. About how old were you when your father died, and left you in charge of Uncle Nathan?"

Toby seemed to reflect.

"N-n-nearly five," he finally answered.

"H'm, old enough to remember something about the past, I'd imagine, Toby. Think now, do you remember your father, and how you lived in Cincinnati?"

"Oh, yes, I remember him quite well!" replied Toby, again speaking plainly; "I often think of him when I'm trying to go to sleep, hungry enough at that, on my little cot up in the attic. And, Max, we must have had lots of money, too, because I had all I wanted to eat. There was a servant, too, that cried when Uncle took me away. I can see her face right now, as she hugged me."

"That sounds good, Toby. Then this servant was a woman; now, have you ever been able to remember her name?" Max went on asking, having a point in view.

"Yes, it was Maggie! Sometimes in my dreams



I am with her again. Oh, I shall never forget her good, kind face, never, Max!" and the tears actually shone in Toby's eyes as he said this, accompanied with a sigh, as if thinking that at least he could never hope to see her in the flesh again.

"Well, now, I'd call this bully good luck. You're telling me heaps, Toby; and I want you to know that the thing begins to look mighty encouraging right now. Try once more and think if you can remember anything about the name of the street your father lived on?"

"It gets a l-l-little hazy when I try to think of t-t-that," responded the other, as he put his hand up to his head in a meditative way; "but I remember that it was up on a hill, Max; and the cars ran past our door, too. I can hear them t-t-thunder along often as I lie there, trying to think."

"Well, Cincinnati is surrounded by hills, just like we read old Rome sat on her seven hills. Suppose, now, I mention a few, and if anyone strikes you as familiar, just pull me up? How does that suit you, Toby?"

"I t-t-think I'd know the sound if I h-h-heard it," replied the other, eagerly.

"Well, there's Price Hill—that doesn't strike you at all, I see; then Clifton, Mt. Auburn, College Hill, Mt. Harrison, Avondale, Mt. Adams—none of them makes you look up at all, do they? How about Walnut Hills, Toby?"

"That's it, Max!" exclaimed the other, like a

flash; "yes, I know it now—Walnut Hills! Oh, that was where we lived, my father, Maggie and me!"

"Fine for you, Toby. Now you are sure the cars ran past the door; perhaps when you shut your eyes and think real hard you might recognize the name of the street. How would Gilbert Avenue do, for a starter?"

"It s-s-seems to me I've heard that name b-b-before," Toby answered, slowly.

"Then we can put it down as pretty certain that it *was* Gilbert Avenue," chuckled Max. "Why, we're making the biggest kind of progress, Toby. I bet you a smart man like my father could go to old Cincinnati right now, with that much information and learn all about your folks."

"Oh, d-d-do you mean to t-t-tell your father, M-m-max?"

"I sure do," came the firm reply. "I believe you're being badly treated—that your father left plenty of money for you to be well taken care of, and that this miserly old uncle of yours is scheming in some way to get hold of the property; or anyhow squeeze it all he can, up to the time you're of age and he just *has* to hand it over to you."

"And will your father m-m-make him change our way of living?" asked Toby.

"You just wait and see what can be done. Now, Toby, let's turn again to what you saw that time

peeping out of his desk. You believe it was a copy of your father's will, do you?"

"Y-y-yes."

"What makes you call it a *copy*, Toby?"

"B-b-because, you s-s-see, it was in Uncle Nathan's handw-w-writing," Toby replied, promptly enough, at which Max smiled broadly.

"Why, this is just pie for me, Toby," he remarked. "I can see the finish of old Uncle Nathan and his schemes. We know the city sure; we know that it was on Walnut Hills, and we think the street was Gilbert Avenue. Now, a will would be on record and my father can easily find out what it provides for. He will hunt up the lawyer, too, who drew it for your father. You see, Uncle Nathan keeps to himself, and nobody has ever heard a word of this. He must have copied the will, so as to keep it fresh in his mind. Toby, cheer up, there's a better day coming for you, old fellow!"

Max thrust out his hand and gripped that of his chum, which he squeezed with all the vigor of his fresh young heart. And poor Toby smiled, as he winked very hard, to dry up the briny drops that would persist in showing themselves, much to his disgust; since he took it to be babyish for a boy of his years to cry.

He could not even trust himself to say another word, but turning, hastily, rushed away. Max looked after him with more affection than he had ever dreamed he possessed for Toby Jucklin. The



wretched life which the other was living, in charge of his uncle, who was yearly becoming more of a skinflint, appealed to him as few things ever had.

"I'll tell father all about it," he was saying to himself, as he pushed both motorcycles into the barn; "yes, and Owen in the bargain, because he's got a splendid head for unraveling mysteries and puzzles; took all the prizes the *Weekly Town Topics* offered in their contest last year, and said they were easy money for him. The bunch of us ought to be able to get things straight for Toby. I believe Uncle Nathan is doing the wrong thing, and that father can have him knocked out as Toby's guardian."

The prospect of the boy having a decent gentleman appointed by the court to act in his interests, and give him a good home, appealed immensely to kind-hearted Max; who was chuckling at a great rate as he started for the house.

The Hastings home was just a little way outside the town of Carson. It had quite large grounds around the house, with trees and gardens besides, to add to its looks.

"I'll see to it that the barn door is sure enough locked before we go to bed to-night," Max was saying to himself as he neared the side door of the house. "Not that I believe the Ted Shafter bunch would dare try and steal our machines; but you never can tell. And I reckon it's true, what we used to write in our copy books in the lower grades,



that 'an ounce of prevention is better than a whole pound of cure.' Yes, I'll lock the stable door before the horse is stolen. There comes Owen, booming along just like he had ridden a motorcycle all his life. He's grinning for all get-out, too. Wonder what funny thing happened to Bandy-legs?"

Owen made a gesture with his hand, which his cousin interpreted to mean that he wanted him to wait a minute.

"What makes you laugh so much?" demanded Max, as the other dropped off his machine close beside him.

"Oh, that Bandy-legs is the limit and a whole circus!" chuckled Owen. "He's going to make us all the fun we can stand. To see those short legs of his working the pedals when he starts out, and before the engine begins to take hold, is enough alone to give a fellow the heartburn. Then he gets into the queerest scrapes right along."

"What's he been up to now?" asked Max, curiously; for, like every healthy boy, he enjoyed a joke, even though it might be on himself at times.

"Why, it's like this, you see," began Owen, trying to sober down so that he could talk intelligently; "when we got near their street, first thing I knew I heard him give a whoop. He'd gone in too close to the side of the road, and a branch of a tree that hung low down had snatched his hat off just as fine as you please. It made me think of the old story of Absalom, King David's son, who was hung by his

long hair. But all Bandy-legs had to do was to stop and go back to pull his hat down. Made lots of trouble, though, and gave him the rattles."

"Oh, then something else happened, did it?" questioned Max.

"It sure did," replied the other, again smiling broadly. "Why, poor old Bandy-legs had hardly got started, decent-like again, before he struck something on the side of the road, and took a header right over the front of his machine!"

Max looked a trifle serious.

"Whew! I hope it wasn't serious for either Bandy-legs or his machine," he said.

"Wheel wasn't hurt one bit; and as for him, he landed head down in a mud pond alongside the road. Oh, what a sight he was when he came crawling ashore, with the mud dripping from him! And, Max, the worst of it was, it happened right near his own home, where his mother, father and Sis were standing out on the porch, waiting for us to show up, because they had heard the sound of the motors!"

Max whistled to indicate his feelings.

"Pretty tough on Bandy-legs," he remarked.

"Oh, he took it all right," Owen went on to say; "laughed fit to kill at the funny side of the accident; and said he was going to conquer that old bucking broncho if it took him all summer!"

"Good for Bandy-legs; he shows the true Outing Boys' grit, all right," observed Max, enthusiastical-

ly. "And sooner or later he'll come around all right."

"If he don't break his neck trying," remarked Owen. "After he had wiped some of the mud off, he insisted on showing his father just how well he could manage his machine; and, Max, he did go splendid, too. Even his father declared it was wonderful how Clarence had managed to master such an intricate contrivance."

"Then he didn't forbid Bandy-legs to keep on riding?" asked Max, hopefully.

"Oh, no; he's beginning to look at things a little sensibly now; sees that the times are different from when he was a boy, and that things go along faster. Then the fact that we boys earned every dollar of the money the wheels cost had a lot to do with the way Mr. Griffin looked at it. He says he never heard of boys doing such a fine piece of business."

"Well, it was a big scoop, all right; and I haven't heard of a single find since we gave up the pearl-hunting business, Owen. I reckon we got all there were in the waters of the good old Big Sunflower."

"Got your machine put away, have you, Max?"

"Yes, and don't be surprised when you see Toby's motorcycle alongside mine. He was afraid to take it home; didn't know but what Uncle Nathan might lock it up and try to dispose of it; because he never heard of such extravagance in all his mean old life. You see, up to now he hasn't even heard about the finding of the pearls. Toby says he

would have made it pretty warm for him if he'd learned."

"Poor old Toby, he does lead a hard life of it," remarked Owen.

"You don't know half he's suffered," Max went on. "I've just had a heart-to-heart talk with him, Cousin, and he's told me things that riled me up. I'm going to have father look into his affairs, because I believe he's being badly treated by his uncle, and that if Toby had his rights he'd be living in comfort. But you trundle your wheel into the stable and give it some oats if you think it's hungry. Then come up to our room, and I'll tell you something that will open your eyes and make you think. I want your advice, Owen, the worst kind; and our chum, Toby, needs help. So skip along now, and don't keep me waiting longer than you can."

As if Owen, after having his boyish curiosity excited in this manner, could linger one second more than was absolutely necessary.



## CHAPTER VI.

### AT THE DOOR OF THE BIG BARN.

“WAKE up, Max!”

“Why, what’s the matter, Owen; it don’t seem to be near daylight yet?”

“Sure not, and I don’t think it’s even midnight; but there’s somebody moving around out there near our barn, and you know our motorcycles——”

But Max was out of bed in a “jiffy,” as Steve Dowdy would have said.

“The dickens you say, Owen! How d’ye know that?” he exclaimed, as he fumbled to find the chair on which his clothes were tossed; for it was pitch dark, the young moon having sunk behind the western horizon.

“Why, I just happened to wake up and couldn’t get to sleep again,” the other went on to say as he, too, hurried into some of his clothes. “While I was lying here and thinking about what great times we are going to have right away, I somehow thought I heard a sound like a stick snapping outside. Anyhow it made me crawl out of bed and go over to the window here.”

“Yes, go on, Owen; hurry up and tell the whole

thing," urged Max, as his cousin got down on hands and knees to hunt on the floor for some missing article of clothing.

"Just as I got to the window I saw a little flash of fire down close to the barn."

"Fire!" exclaimed Max. "Oh, my goodness, I hope they wouldn't be so silly as to try to burn the place down, just to spite us! That gang has a pretty bad name, but I can't believe they'd go so far as that, Owen."

"Don't know anything about it," the other continued, doggedly. "All I can say is I saw the flash, just like somebody had lit a match to look for something. Here, let's have that fine little electric torch you bought the other day, Max; it'll help me find my other sock all right. There she is, and that's a bully little contraption, too."

"A light, and with gasoline around," Max went on, as though the idea did not appeal to him at all; "I don't like that, Owen. Even if those fellows only mean to play some trick on us, they may run into a serious accident. Why, if that gasoline explodes one of the crowd might get badly scorched."

"Which would serve him about right, then," Owen muttered, as he went on dressing in some sort of slipshod way; for under the circumstances neither of the boys cared about how they put things on.

"I don't see anything around that place right now," Max remarked, in the same sort of low

whisper in which the conversation up to now had been carried on.

"Course you don't. Think they want to keep on making a row and showing all kinds of flares to tell people what they're doing? Not much. When fellows are up to doing the nasty stunts that Ted Shafter and his crowd follow, they keep in the dark as much as possible."

"And I haven't caught a single sound from down there, either," Max went on.

"All the same I heard one at the time I jumped out of bed," Owen persisted in declaring. "Are you near dressed now, Cousin?"

"All I expect to be," came the reply.

"Now what are we going to do?" asked Owen.

"Go out and see what's going on," answered Max, resolutely.

"We don't know what we might be up against, do we?" remarked the other, who was always reckoned an exceedingly cautious lad, making due preparations for trouble before it descended on his head.

"Oh, I see what you're hinting at, old fellow," chuckled Max. "Yes, since that robbery of old Farmer Griffin, Bandy-legs' uncle, folks *have* been a little worked up. There's just the least bit of chance that it *might* be a bunch of yeggs trying to break in here. And on that account, then, I agree with you, we ought to take some sort of weapons

along with us. Now, what do you want to carry, Owen?"

"I was thinking the old horse pistol that hangs on the wall would do for me," replied the other, quickly.

"But, land's sake, it hasn't been loaded for twenty-five years, Owen!"

"Don't care a bit; it's dreadful looking enough to scare most anyone into having a blue fit," returned the other, doggedly.

"And the hammer is really broken, to tell the truth," Max went on.

"All the same I'm going to carry it and give some fellow a fright, perhaps. Now, how about you, Max?"

"If I was like you I'd say that sword my grandfather carried through the Civil War would be good enough for me. But on the whole I think I'd rather have something that can *reach*, in case a fellow is running away," whispered Max.

"That means your shotgun, I take it?" queried his cousin.

"Just what it does; and here it is," Max went on, as he lifted some article down from a couple of hooks on the wall. "Fortunately, I can put my hand right on a couple of duck shells that were left over from last winter. Now both barrels are in prime shape to speak. Come along, Owen, let's be going downstairs."

"Your little electric torch, Max?"



“Oh, you can be sure I’ve got that gripped tight, all right, my boy. Careful, now, and don’t make any more noise than you can help. Father is a light sleeper, and if he heard us creeping along, he’d like as not call out to ask what was doing. And that would sort of queer things, I’m afraid.”

The two half-dressed boys began to pass down the stairs. Fortunately, they knew every foot of the way, and could even in the dark tell where to step, in order to avoid all obstacles. Hence, Max did not have the least occasion to make use of his trusty electric torch while they were on the way to the back door.

Passing through dining room and kitchen, they presently reached the exit. Here Max found a little difficulty in pushing back the obstinate bolt, which finally gave way with more or less of a throb, that made their anxious hearts jump, such was the nervous strain under which both lads were laboring just then.

But all remained silent; and after listening briefly Max and his cousin passed out of the house.

The stars were shining brightly in the heavens above, but all the same it seemed pitchy dark. They knew just which way to turn in order to follow the path to the barn; and with Max leading the way, the march was begun.

It would be useless to say that neither of them felt the least quiver, when in truth they experienced all sorts of shivery feelings. After all, they were

only boys and quite unused to such excitement as this. But neither of them had the slightest idea of quitting; they were not built that way.

So with wildly beating hearts, and teeth that were tightly compressed, they continued along the walk that would take them to the barn.

Crickets were chirping in the grass and under the gloomy trees. It was much too early in the summer for katydids to tune up; for among all country folks there is a tradition that frost is due just six weeks after the first lay of the katydid can be heard.

Presently Owen realized that his companion, whose dark figure he could barely make out just ahead of him, had abruptly left the regular walk and was now pushing along by another route.

Although he might not exactly understand why Max did this, he felt that there must evidently be a good reason for his action. And Owen was ready to accept whatever his cousin thought would be best for the success of their little midnight saunter.

Several times did Max stop as though to listen. But although Owen strained his hearing he was unable to detect any unusual sound near by.

They were now close to the big barn and stable, which began to loom up against the starry sky; but if any suspicious prowlers were around they must be keeping themselves pretty close, because as yet they made no sign.

Suddenly something touched Max on the arm and gave him a thrill; but instantly he realized that it was Owen who had leaned forward to press a finger on his person.

"I heard it," Max said in the faintest sort of whisper that told his comrade he too had caught the low murmur of human voices from some point close by.

Max made a little change in his route, so that he was now heading straight toward the spot where those mutterings could still be heard. Evidently he believed in striking while the iron was hot, and going direct to the core of the matter.

As they drew closer the sounds increased, so that they presently made out some three different tones. This seemed to agree with what they had first suspected; for did not Ted Shafter have just *two* boon companions, who stuck to him through thick and thin?

On the other hand, they would be up against a hard proposition should the prowlers prove to be a trio of desperate hoboes, of the type known to officers of the law as yeggmen, because they are really hard criminals, who never hesitate to rob a bank, a private residence, or a jewelry shop in a country town.

Some boys would have held up and considered it the part of wisdom that they waken their father and get all the assistance possible. Somehow it never seemed to occur to Max and Owen.



They were armed and could present quite a formidable appearance to any foe, if it came to a showdown; and even Owen seemed to have more or less confidence in his wretched old horse pistol, a relic of bygone days.

Once the low talking stopped, but only to go on again presently, as though possibly those who were crouching near by might have imagined they heard a sound that appeared in some degree suspicious, but, upon listening, were reassured once more.

It was creditable to both of the boys that they persisted in moving along, even while remaining in dense ignorance as to the identity or character of these interlopers, who had apparently entered the Hastings grounds in secret, and were bent on carrying out some unlawful design.

Now they were very close to the spot. Max believed he understood exactly where these parties must be crouching, since he knew the vicinity of that barn so well, from having played around it many years.

Yes, he was confident that with due diligence he and Owen could manage to come directly upon the others and give them the surprise of their lives when the brilliant light of that little electric hand torch was suddenly flashed into their eyes and they saw the frowning muzzles of the shotgun and horse pistol thrust up close to their faces.

If it turned out to be Ted Shafter and his comrades, Amiel Toots and Shack Beggs, Max was try-



ing to think what ought to be done to such rascals, who would try to injure three precious motorcycles, just in a spirit of mischief. It would certainly serve them just about right if they were handed over to the head of the local police; although, since Ted's father was a leading politician in Carson, even that might not serve to end his evil practices, as influences would be brought to bear to get the boys free on promise of better behavior.

On the other hand, if the prowlers turned out to be big men, tramps who were desperate characters, the situation might develop into something that would call for other assistance. In that event Max would feel justified in shouting for his father to come upon the scene.

At any rate, they were now so near the place where the unseen parties seemed to be clustered that whatever was about to happen could not be much longer delayed.

The whispering and chuckling had started up again. Something must appeal to the three fellows as more or less funny, to judge from the way in which they kept up this sort of low laughter at intervals. There was also a champing sound, which neither Max nor his cousin could understand; but which might stand for almost anything.

Perhaps the fellows were trying to bore a hole through the barn door, in order to reach the catch, and in this way open a way to where the motorcycles were stored. Max knew that such a thing

could be done, even though the key had played its part, and the lock held, up to the time the second door was made free.

Making sure that Owen was at his side, he pushed on just a little farther. Then he judged by the sounds that they were almost upon the unseen trespassers. Once again had an absolute silence fallen. It was as though some slight sound made by Max or his cousin had been heard, and those they expected to surprise might be listening to learn what was up.

Well, there was no use waiting any longer. They had crept as close as seemed possible and the time was surely ripe.

Accordingly, Max assumed as gruff a voice as he could and suddenly cried out:

“Don’t one of you move hand or foot, or we’ll shoot! Consider yourselves under arrest!”

And at the same time he pressed the little knob that caused the electric torch to throw its bright light full ahead in the quarter he wanted to cover.

The result was startling indeed, and both Max and his cousin had their very breath taken away by what they discovered.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

INSTEAD of looking upon three desperate hoboes, or even Ted Shafter and his two faithful followers, Max saw that the intruders were merely a little bunch of boys from town, bent on securing some of the ripe harvest apples that grew close to the Hastings barn, filling the air with their tempting aroma.

They were white with sudden fright as they stared at the gun and pistol that threatened them, with that strange glow seeming to come from the bull's-eye lantern of a police officer.

Then the champing sound, which Max and Owen had fancied might be made by an auger boring through the barn door, was doubtless the boys' jaws, working overtime on what supply of apples they had already managed to secure.

Having been alarmed somehow while engaged in filling their pockets, perhaps when a branch broke, producing the sharp sound that Owen had heard, the young orchard thieves had hastened to hide under the dense shadow of the barn and amuse

themselves, while waiting, by eating a portion of their booty.

Max burst out into a loud laugh, in which his cousin joined. And possibly the sound served to break the spell that seemed to bind the three terrified apple thieves. They sprang hastily to their feet and made a wild break of it, running like deer through the darkness. For the time being they entirely forgot the terrible threat which Max had uttered at the time he first threw that white light into their faces.

Had he wanted to fire his gun in order to add wings to their flight, Max could hardly have found a chance to do so. He was shaking all over with laughter.

Really, there was not the slightest need of doing the least thing in order to assist the departure of the intruders. They were rushing along in mad haste, utterly regardless as to what they ran up against in the darkness.

Every now and then the two standing there would hear a loud bump, accompanied by a distinct groan, that told how some tree had suddenly disputed the way with an unfortunate young orchard robber. Perhaps the three boys would think twice before attempting such a midnight raid again. And especially would they be apt to shun the Hastings fold from that night on.

“Well, what d’ye think of that?” gasped Owen, when finally the last rustling of the leaves and



trampling of rushing feet had died away, bringing silence again on the scene.

"It's one on us, all right," replied Max, still shaking with the humor of the situation.

"Looks like it," the other went on; "to think of us bringing out all these deadly weapons," shaking the ancient horse pistol as he spoke; "and then to find that instead of the desperate yeggs, or even Ted Shafter's crowd, it was only a bunch of scared little kids from town, with a liking for harvest apples! Wow, I'll nearly have a fit every time I think of the midnight alarm, Max!"

"Wait till I take a look at the lock of the barn door," remarked the other, as he stepped forward, and at the same time turned the glow of his torch in the proper quarter; "not the faintest sign of it's having been meddled with. Say, let's go back to bed, cousin. It's a little chilly out here, d'ye know?"

"But ten to one we couldn't shiver anything like those three kids are right now," the other observed, as he followed Max toward the house.

Apparently the adventure did not serve to keep either of the boys awake very long; for after crawling back into bed they soon began to breathe in that regular way, telling of sound sleep.

Morning came at last and the boys were early astir. As they anticipated making their first trip with the new motorcycles on this day, nothing could

have tempted either of them to "lie in," as growing boys like to do ordinarily.

About eight o'clock, therefore, it was no surprise to hear the now familiar popping of an exhaust down the road, and discover Steve Dowdy humming along toward the Hastings home.

Hardly had he arrived than another sound announced that Bandy-legs was coming. He, too, showed up in good condition, so that they were now all on hand but Toby, who would have to come afoot, since his machine was already present.

Max had been thoughtful enough, in having the lunch prepared, to include a third party, since it went without saying that Toby would bring nothing from his house. He had the greatest difficulty in securing enough to eat while at home, and certainly his miserly uncle would never allow him to carry even half a loaf of bread away with him.

Max had found a good chance to talk with his father on the preceding night, with regard to Toby's troubles. Mr. Hastings was a sensible man who felt keenly for boys in all their relations. And when he had heard all that his son knew, or suspected, he expressed himself as determined to look deeply into the matter.

"I am of the same opinion as you, son," he had remarked in conclusion; "and believe that Mr. Jucklin is keeping something back. Just as like as not there may have been some property left to Toby by his father, and that he is entitled to better

times than he seems to be having. But be careful not to throw out a hint to anybody, and caution your cousin the same way."

And although nothing definite was said on the subject, Max understood just why his father did not wish him to talk. It would put old Nathan on his guard, for one thing, and that was a bad turn in the case. Then, again, he might take action against the Hastings for defamation of character. There had been a remarkable affair in the local courts of Carson not so long before that kept people laughing for some time, and ever since then neighbors were very careful how they said anything that might serve as a basis for a libel suit.

And Max was also positive that his father would take the first opportunity for going to Cincinnati, to investigate, and pick up some facts connected with the matter. He wished he might go with him, but that could hardly be. And, knowing how thorough his father always was in everything he attempted, Max felt sure that better times were in store for poor Toby ere long. Likewise a little surprise for scheming Uncle Nathan.

"I see him coming right now!" announced Steve, after they had been waiting quite some time for the absent member of the club.

Max breathed easier, for he had begun to feel uneasy. What if the old miser had happened to get wind of the remarkable good fortune of his nephew, in conjunction with the other four fellows,



and had demanded that he turn over his share of the sales of the pearls to his legal guardian?

But it was all right, else Toby would not be hurrying along, waving his hat to his chums.

"He k-k-kept me to c-c-cut ever so much wood," he gasped, as he reached the spot where the others awaited him, Max and Owen with a warm grip of the hand that rather surprised both Steve and Bandy-legs, who were not in the secret.

"It's luck you got off at all," remarked the former of these two, who despised Toby's uncle more than he did any person in all Carson or vicinity.

"I'd just like to get that old man in the swimmin' hole; wouldn't I duck him to beat the band!" declared Bandy-legs.

"H-h-how's everything?" asked Toby, recovering his breath in part, and even smiling a little as he caught the meaning look Max gave him; which he rightly construed to mean that it was all right about his father taking up the case.

"Everything's lovely and the goose hangs high," sang out Bandy-legs, gayly, as he stooped to attend to some little thing in connection with his motorcycle.

"Well," declared Owen, just then, "the goose had a mighty narrow squeak last evening. If his hair had been longer he'd have hung high, all right, in the branches of a tree."

"Right you are," answered Bandy-legs, laughing himself as he remembered what had overtaken him



on that occasion; and if it had been the hard road instead of that mud hole, I'd be wearing a big bump right now, instead of this chipper smile. I tell you, it's far better to be born lucky than rich, every time. The mud holes for me; others can take to the roads when they come a cropper."

"Do we get started soon?" demanded impatient Steve.

"Nothing to hinder us, that I can see," replied Max.

"How about the gas; have our tanks all been filled?" asked Bandy-legs.

"Speak for yourself; the three that stayed here last night were looked after this morning," declared Owen, promptly.

"Oh, I saw to mine at home," remarked Steve.

"Ditto for me," Bandy-legs went on to say.

"Then suppose we get a move on, fellows. Hurrah for the Outing Boys of Carson, and success to them on their first run!" Steve cried, as he pushed his heavy machine forward abreast of the others.

Within ten minutes they were all away. The start was made without any accident, which all of them considered a lucky omen. Of course they were strung out along the road in single file, for whoever saw two motorcyclists running abreast as bicyclists love to do? The tremendous pace at which the former sometimes go prevents this close association, and there are also other reasons to keep them a certain distance apart.

Max led off, as the selected leader. After him came impatient Steve, then Bandy-legs, Toby, and, finally, Owen brought up the rear.

On an open stretch they kept well within sight of one another. Sometimes, when a bend of the road was encountered, they would for a brief time lose track of each other, but as a rule at least three of them remained in sight all the time.

So quite a number of miles were passed over and everything seemed to be going quite well. Max even let out a little speed, and they had a run that fairly thrilled the pulses of the novice riders.

The one thing that struck them as odd was the fact that they could not enjoy conversation while on the move. Such a distance separated the riders that they must bottle up what they had to say until a stop was made and they could gather in a clump.

Max, in advance, was not at all idle. Many times he would glance down at the road in front of his moving machine, as though something he saw there interested him exceedingly.

The fact of the matter was he had discovered plain marks that told him other motorcycles must have gone along that same road, and not a great while before.

Max, who was always a close observer of little things, which might be passed by, if seen at all by others, knew that these marks had been made since early morning, because they passed over every other track left by farm wagons going in to market.

"That must mean Ted and his bunch have come up this way, and it wasn't when they were off yesterday, either," Max was saying to himself, from time to time.

The thought gave him no pleasure. He knew the vindictive spirit that as a rule dominated Ted Shafter. And if the others were to run across the Outing Boys the chances seemed ten to one they would be tempted to try and do them an evil turn.

So Max was watching for a good chance to leave the main road and take to some likely looking side pike. Anything to get away from that crowd. They would be welcome to nine tenths of the universe if only they left Max and his chums have a chance to enjoy their little tenth alone and unmolested.

In places the road was exceedingly narrow. And then again it would be bordered by a swampy stretch of territory, that had been covered with logs and made into what was known locally as a corduroy road.

Max hoped they would not have the ill luck to meet with any vehicle, an automobile, for instance, going the other way at this bad part of the pike. In case such a thing happened there was apt to be some confusion among his companions, especially if the warning came suddenly and caused more or less excitement.

And so he was constantly on the lookout.

It had been arranged that in case he wished his



chum to stop he was to give a certain signal. This was to consist of a rapid succession of sharp blasts from his horn.

Without the least warning, therefore, this thrilling sound broke upon the ears of the other four. There was an immediate effort to check up; the engines were shut off and brakes applied, as they had been instructed must be done. And, of course, a lot of entirely unnecessary energy was applied.

Bandy-legs, as usual, was the unlucky one. He had failed as yet to get the hang of this stop business. Possibly he applied the brake so hard that the machine was brought to a quick stand, while he kept right on.

Be that as it may, he repeated the ridiculous tactics he had practiced on the preceding afternoon, as explained by Owen after he rejoined his cousin.

Max had already leaped from his machine, and looked back at the time he gave the signal to dismount; for he wished to ascertain what success his chums had in making the stop. Hence he was just in time to witness the flop of Bandy-legs as his motorcycle swerved from the road to stick in the mud of the swamp, and allowing the unlucky rider to take a beautiful header over the wide-spreading handlebars.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHAT THE MAN ON THE HAY WAGON TOLD.

SQUASH!

Everybody heard that sickening sound, as poor Bandy-legs came down in the midst of the soft mud of the swampy tract bordering the road. Max, immediately abandoning his machine, ran hastily back to assist his unfortunate chum, if such a thing proved necessary.

When he arrived, however, Bandy-legs was crawling out of the muck and hastily examining his machine, in order to ascertain whether any damage had been done beyond getting the front wheel covered with black mud.

And Bandy-legs *was* a sight! Max wanted to shriek with laughter as he looked at his face, every inch of which was covered with slime. The "plunger" coolly wiped the mud away, and had the nerve to grin at his comrades, as they gathered sympathetically around.

"Ain't hurt a bit, fellers," he managed to splutter, spitting out some of the swamp, that had forced its way between his teeth when he investigated the

conditions under the oozy water that barely covered the rank mud.

"Which do you mean, the motorcycle or yourself?" demanded Owen, who was trying hard to keep from bursting out into a laugh at the comical appearance of the unfortunate Bandy-legs.

"Neither one of us," replied the other, quickly. "But then I reckon I'm a sight, fellers. Oh, laugh if you want to; 'twon't hurt me a teeny bit! Let go, Steve, or you'll bust the biler holdin' in."

And at that they did laugh until their sides ached, while Bandy-legs gravely pulled his heavy machine carefully out of the swamp, and began to wipe it off with some grass, forgetting all about his own predicament, with that coating of mud on the entire upper part of his person; indeed, all over him, in fact.

"Hey, what made you give that sudden call for a halt?" asked Bandy-legs, after the first spasm of their laughter had passed.

Max turned and pointed along the road.

"A big load of hay, and heading this way, too!" exclaimed Steve.

"Yes, and taking about every inch of space there is," Max remarked. "I saw at once we hadn't a ghost of a show of getting by, and would have to find a place to haul our wheels to one side while he drove past. That's what we must do right now,

fellows. Everybody look for a spot where he can get off the road."

"Huh, I've got mine picked out already," remarked Bandy-legs; at which they all roared again, as he had expected them to.

Max himself hurried back to where he had lowered his motorcycle to the road in his haste to reach the unlucky one, before Bandy-legs found himself actually smothered in the oozy mud.

He quickly saw how he could push the wheel aside, and thus give the approaching hay wagon room to get past. The man was laughing, as though he, too, had been a witness of Bandy-legs' mad plunge.

An idea striking him, Max held up his hand about the time the horses were on a line with him, snorting a little at sight of the brightly colored motorcycle, to which sort of vehicle they were no doubt strangers.

"Sorry to make ye git out, young feller," said the farmer, with a wide grin; "but she happens to narrer down quite some around here, an' in course it ain't to be spected that I cud leave the road a mite, with this load. I'd sink in to the hub, and never git out 'tall, till I unloaded the hull business."

"Oh, don't mention it," sang out Max, pleasantly; "we always give way to a wagon that carries a load. One of my chums was in a little too big a

hurry, that's all, and curious to find out if the muck bed had any bottom. He knows now. By the way, have you been long on the road this morning?"

"On'y a hour er so, mister. My farm lies 'bout two mile up yander. I git to this road along a leetle one of my own, ye see," replied the other, readily enough.

"Then I'm afraid you can't give me the information I wanted," said Max, in a somewhat disappointed tone.

"What be that, mister?" demanded the man.

"Oh! I was only wondering whether you had met with any other young fellows on machines like ours, this morning? They've gone along here, as the marks show," Max continued.

"Ain't made a single thing turn out yit, mister," the farmer answered; and Max was beginning to think that he would not get any clew from this source, when the man went on to remark: "But now as I think of it, thar was some sort of gang went on daown the road jest afore I kim on to it. Reckons as how they must 'a' been as many as three fellers in the line, all boomin' away like fun, an' leavin' the meanest smell behind I got this many a day. How's that strike ye, young feller; be them the ones ye're lookin' for?"

"I reckon they are, farmer, and much obliged



to you for the news. Now, if you'll pull along, I can get back on firm ground. This thing quakes under the weight of myself and machine, you see, and threatens to cave away with us both."

So the man with the big wide-spreading load of hay gave a chirrup to his prancing horses, that really needed no goad to induce them to continue their forward movement, for they did not like the looks of the queer smelling machine that glistened in the bright sunshine.

In turn he passed each of the others. When it came Bandy-legs', the man nodded his head and made some remark that the boy received in good part. Owen, who was close by, thought it sounded like:

"How does it go, young feller? Practicin' fur the gymnastic act in the circus, I reckons. Bound to be a big success. Let me know when you show and I'll come as fur as twenty mile to see ye do her agin."

Then the big hay wagon went creaking down the narrow road, and the boys were once more free to go on, whenever they pleased.

However, Max had pity on the mud-daubed Bandy-legs, and called a halt of ten minutes in order to give him a chance to clean himself and wheel up. There being plenty of water handy, Bandy-legs soon made himself fairly presentable;

while what mud was left on the machine could be better knocked off after it had dried.

"This here is only a beginning, fellers, you hear me," remarked the one who had made such a close investigation of the qualities of the swamp mud. "I'm going to stick this out if she takes all summer. A Griffin never owns up to being licked, whether by man, beast or benzine wagon. She's just got to behave, sooner or later, and own that I'm the master. I'll show her who's boss. She's a bucker, all right; but then I always pick out soft places to drop on, you notice."

"S-s-say, Bandy-legs," began Toby, breaking a long silence on his part.

"Hey, fellers, Toby's woke up at last!" exclaimed the one addressed. "Go right along and get it out of your system. Everybody give advice; and then I'll just do what happens to come to me on the spur of the moment. Speak, Toby!"

"I was j-j-just g-g-going to s-s-say—" began the stammerer, when impatient Steve broke rudely in on his obstructed flow of words:

"Then why don't you hurry your stumps and say it?"

"—to s-s-say," Toby calmly went on, paying no attention to this break, "that you ought to t-t-tie yourself in the s-s-saddle with a r-r-rope!"

"Now, that's the best yet," scoffed Bandy-legs.

“Say, just imagine what would happen to poor me if the old wheel stopped short. I’m no iron man. Want to break every rib I’ve got, eh? No, thank you, I prefer to keep on in my good old way, looking out for nice, easy spots to light on. That’ll do for advice now. Some of the rest of you may need help later on. Just remember that I don’t claim any patent on that same high spring. You’re welcome to it, fellers. And I’m going to cudgel my brains to make up something that’ll meet the case. Skip along now; scoot!”

Apparently Bandy-legs was not in the least dismayed by his many adventures. They seemed to serve as a tonic to brace him up; and he could see that he was affording his chums the time of their lives. But Bandy-legs was a generous fellow, and did not mind putting himself out a little, if by so doing he could give his comrades an occasional merry half hour.

They got started all over again. Practice makes perfect in most cases; and after being compelled to mount and be off so many times, all of them showed signs of becoming quite proficient in the knack of starting their engines without a hitch.

Now and then they came across farms, although as a rule the country up in this region was given up to woods and swamps. Max had managed to get hold of a pretty fair map of the surrounding

territory. He had studied it well, and was thus familiar with its details.

Hence he knew that some ten miles off to one side lay one of the greatest pieces of swamp land and marsh bog in the entire State. Cranberries were grown with profit in sections of the latter; but for many miles there stretched the most mysterious waste imaginable, where men had been known to lose their way when trapping muskrats, and suffer hardships before seeing their homes again.

Max had long wished some day to explore this tremendous swamp, and if the opportunity ever came up he meant to attempt the job, which somehow appealed to one of his adventurous nature.

He was thinking about it now as he went smoothly along the road, sometimes climbing a fair-sized hill, to immediately speed down the other side, with power shut off and brake partly in service, lest his pace become overwhelming for a novice.

And still he could occasionally see plain marks to tell him that Ted and his two friends were somewhere ahead. Evidently they had started on this morning, bent upon outdoing the work of the Outing Boys. Max hoped he would not turn a bend and come upon the trio of rascals; not that he felt any fear as to personal violence, as they were five to three; but Ted was sure to say things calculated to make the atmosphere rank and unpleasant, and



which, with fiery Steve in the party, might in the end lead to an eruption.

Steve, who came directly behind the leader, being curious to get certain information, had put on a little extra speed, so that he drew gradually closer to Max.

"How far d'ye think we've come by now, Max?" he called out, presently.

"Do you mean from Carson, Steve?" answered the other.

"Sure, any nowhere else. That's where I live and eat and sleep," proceeded the other, quickly.

As Max was the only one who happened to have a cyclometer attached to his machine, he must therefore be consulted by any one of the party who wished to know the distance traveled from time to time.

"Road winds around more or less, you see, Steve," he called back over his shoulder, without turning his head, a dangerous trick in a new beginner.

"Sho! I know that, Max; but how far are we from good old Carson?" proceeded the other.

"As the crow flies, I should say about eleven miles," replied Max.

"Hang the crow!" burst out Steve. "What I want to know is just how far we've come on these machines this morning. What does the record say, Max?"

"Nineteen miles now, and will be twenty in a few seconds," replied Max, obligingly.

"Not so bad for a lot of greenhorns, eh?" crowed Steve; and even Bandy-legs, who had caught question and answer, let out a shout of exultation.

"Just think of it, twenty miles in this short time, and all without hardly working the muscles in a feller's legs! I'll have a cramp pretty soon if I don't get busy and use 'em!" he exclaimed.

"You can't say the same of the muscles of your body, Bandy," jeered Steve. "They get a-plenty of exercise, I take it; and the worst is yet to come."

"Don't blow your horn till you're out of the woods yourself, my fine duck," replied the other, and came near having trouble right away on account of taking his attention from his machine for just a second.

He fell back again, so that Toby and Owen in turn were forced to also abate their pace in order to keep their relative distance apart. But Steve persisted in maintaining a rather dangerous position in the rear of the leader until Max warned him to also fall back some.

Once more the country had become very wild, with not a sign of a farm in sight. Forests bordered the road, which wound in and out like a white thread, and was fairly decent riding.

Max was beginning to despair of finding a chance to leave this thoroughfare and strike out on a different course. His map was an old one, and he had an idea there were new roads made since it had been printed.

“Look out, Max; snake across the road!” suddenly shouted Steve, arousing the leader from a little day dream, in which he had neglected to be as cautious and keep as good a lookout ~~ahead~~ as usual.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE STRANGEST SNAKE EVER KNOWN.

“HEY, look out there!”

“That was a close shave, Bandy-legs; you came within an ace of running me down!” And it would seem that Steve was right, since the boy he addressed had half fallen from his wheel just two feet behind the machine which Steve managed, and which at the time he was frantically trying to push out of the way.

Both Toby and Owen had managed to bring their motorcycles to a halt. At least, in such a sudden alarm the four boys had apparently done fairly well in effecting a sudden stop; nobody had become very much rattled.

“But think of Max! he was so close to that snake he never could brake-up in time to keep from— Say, whatever is the fellow doing right now?”

It was Steve who gave utterance to this exclamation. He was the one who in the first place had called out the warning that thrilled the entire bunch; and under the circumstances then, it was only natural that he should be most concerned.



Why, as yet none of the others had even seen the said serpent.

Of course, at Steve's cry their eyes were immediately turned ahead. Max was there in plain sight, but he did not seem to be battling for his life against a monster snake of any kind.

"Looks like he was bending over examining something," declared Owen.

"That's a fact," said Steve. "I wonder now if he could have just run over the measly old thing? He was going at a pretty smart clip when I gave tongue. Gee, fellows, I c'd take my affidavit I saw the thing just *jump up at Max!* My heart was in my throat when I tried to stop my wheel off sharp."

"But M-m-max seems to be all r-r-right," announced Toby, stoutly.

"Sure he does, and he's found something queer about that snake, too, take my word for it," observed Owen.

"Ain't we the lot of sillies, though, standing here jabbering away and wonderin' what it all means, when we could just as well push ahead and see for ourselves," and as he spoke impatient Steve gave his heavy motorcycle the first shove toward urging an advance.

"There, look at him dropping his wheel right in the road. He's going to skip off after something, boys. Hey, Max, what's the matter? We ain't lost

any snake as I know of. Want us to come along?" And Bandy-legs raised his voice to a shout.

Max turned his head, but only to send back a few words.

"No, you fellows wait up for me. Give a yell if you hear me shout. I might get lost in the big timber."

Then he ran on hastily.

"Huh," grunted Bandy-legs, "not much danger of that, I reckon! If there's anybody able to take care of himself in the woods, it's Max Hastings."

"He's g-g-gone," bubbled out Toby, as Max was seen to spring into the bushes hurriedly, as though either following a trail, or else some sound his quick ears caught.

"Whatever does he want with that snake?" queried the puzzled Steve, shaking his head in bewilderment. "Must 'a' been a mighty curious species, and Max thinks he'd like to let that scientific feller in town have a squint at the same. Ketch me chasing my neck off after a striped reptile. I thought Max had more sense."

"You're away off there, Steve," broke in Owen, quietly; "and if you look again you'll see that your blessed old snake is still where you discovered it!"

Immediately an excited outcry arose.

"Gee, whittiker! looky there, would you? It's stretched right across the road, tail holding fast to one tree, and head on to another. Did you ever see

such a thing?" and Bandy-legs nearly collapsed as he stared.

The other boys burst out into a roar of laughter.

"See it shake its tail now!" mocked Steve. "It's mad at you, Bandy-legs, and is just daring you to come along and try to go past. Wow, ain't it a bustin' long snake though?"

"F-f-first t-t-time I ever knew a rope to be c-c-called a s-s-snake!" shouted Toby.

"A rope! Of course it's a rope. Just as if I didn't know that all the time," declared Bandy-legs, brazenly; "but what in the wide world is a rope doing there; tell me that, fellers?"

"Steve, when you saw it first, it was lying on the road, wasn't it?" asked Owen.

"Just what it was. And I saw it jump up, give you my solemn word I did," replied the other positively.

"We'll soon know something more about this queer old rope that plays such monkey-shines," chuckled Owen, who apparently already had a pretty good idea in that connection.

They pushed right on, each fellow trundling his machine. In this fashion, then, the quartet approached the spot where Max had had his recent rather thrilling adventure.

His motorcycle still lay in the road, just where he had hastily deposited it at the moment of his rapid departure; but they could not hear the least sound from the adjacent woods to tell where Max

had gone. To Steve, Toby and Bandy-legs his actions bordered on the mysterious.

However, their attention was by now riveted upon the rope which was seen to be stretched directly across the road. Each of them in turn, after resting his machine against a friendly tree, strode up to examine that rope. Somehow it made Owen remember the old story about the dozen blind men feeling of the elephant, and afterwards giving separate accounts as to what they thought the wonderful animal, of which they had heard so much, was like.

Steve, Toby and Bandy-legs were in a measure like so many babes in the woods, as they had had practically no experience in woodcraft. He listened to what they were saying among themselves and smiled with amusement.

"It is a sure-enough rope, all right," asserted Steve, as though he had been a little inclined to suspect the thing after all would turn out to be some remarkable specimen of serpent, a road-runner or coach whip, perhaps.

"L-l-looks l-l-like it, anyhow," remarked Toby, as he cautiously put out a hand to touch the thing delicately.

"And see here, fellows, it's tied in a real hard knot at this end; while at the other it's just whipped around that low limb of the tree, like it'd been done in a hurry," Steve declared.



"A good point for you, Steve," remarked Owen, nodding his head in approval.

"Whoopee, I've got it!" and Bandy-legs began to dance around as though he thought himself the champion guesser of the bunch.

"Well, don't be stingy with the news, now, whatever you do," grumbled Steve.

"T-t-tell us!" demanded Toby, eagerly.

"It's a trap!" said the other, solemnly.

"Well, looks like it, all right," Steve admitted; "but go on a little farther, old boy. What kind of a trap?"

"A speed trap!" Bandy-legs ventured. "I've been reading about the same in the papers right along, and this is one, take my word for it, fellers."

"A speed trap!" echoed the scoffing Steve; "what in all creation is that sort of thing, Bandy-legs?"

"Why, you see, in country districts the constables want to get some money from automobilists and motorcyclists, so they pass a law about speed, and two of the officers they hide in a nice place with a rope fastened on one side of the road, just like it is here. Then when they see a machine coming along at a pretty fair clip they yank the rope up, whip the other end around a tree and call on the poor traveler to hands up and deliver. Don't you see now; and ain't I got a head on me for guessing hard knots of puzzles?"

Steve and Toby looked at each other; but only Owen chuckled as if amused, the other two taking Bandy-legs' idea seriously enough.

"Sounds kinder reasonable-like, I must say," remarked Steve, thoughtfully; "but what gets my goat is to have them constables try and hold us up when we couldn't have been going at a pace exceeding the law."

"And w-w-why d-d-did they r-r-run away?" cried Toby, triumphantly.

"Sure thing," demanded Steve. "Never thought of that, now. Looky here, I guess your explanation won't wash, Bandy-legs. Besides, where in thunder is there any town or even village around this wild looking place? Oh, let up on that thing of the constables; there's nothing in it."

"But here's the rope," asserted Bandy-legs, sturdily, not relishing having his brilliant ideas riddled as with a load of birdshot.

"Yes, it's a rope, all right, we admit that," Steve answered.

"And it's been tied across the road so as to upset any motorcyclist that happened to run fair and square against it," went on the other, arguing like a lawyer.

"We grant all that, Bandy-legs; keep going now and you'll mebbe get somewhere," said Steve, coaxingly.

"And you said that you saw it sudden-like jump up into place, didn't you, Steve?"

"I stick to what I said; my eyes didn't fool me on that," asserted that worthy.

"And last of all, you saw Max run into the woods like hot cakes, didn't you?" demanded Bandy-legs, fixing Steve with his eye.

"We all did that," admitted the one on the grill.

"Then," cried Bandy-legs, triumphantly, "I reckon I've proved my point, which is that *somebody* tied this rope here, with the idea of knocking us off our wheels, and then put through the woods, afraid of the consequences. Max, he managed to just escape a bad tumble, and hearing the noise that party made, he got it into his noddle that he wanted to chase after him and see who he was, perhaps bring him back. Say, Owen, am I right?"

At that, finding he could no longer stay out of the argument, and enjoy hearing the others give vent to their opinions, Owen joined the circle.

"I guess you're hitting pretty close to the truth, now, Bandy-legs, since you've hedged, and dropped that silly idea about constables up in this wilderness. It was *somebody* who fixed this rope across the road to serve as a trap. The idea wasn't to get money out of automobilists; it was even worse than that."

"Listen to him, boys!" exclaimed Steve. "Owen knows what it all stands for. While we've been gassing here he's been doing a heap of thinking. Now, Bandy-legs, keep your ears open and you'll

be apt to learn something worth while. Go on, Owen, and tell us what you think!"

Owen looked thoughtful.

"I wish I had that road map of ours here," he said, slowly.

"You mean the one Max carried along with him, don't you?" suggested Steve.

"Yes," replied the other.

"But what has that got to do with this business, tell me that?" Steve went on, his face again alive with wonder.

"Because I'd like to see what sort of turns this road takes that we've been following," replied Owen. "That would kind of explain some things that bother me."

"Well, they can't bother you one quarter as much as they just floor the rest of us," asserted Bandy-legs; "so please hurry your stumps, Owen, and explain what this blessed old road, with all its twists and turns, has got to do with this same rope being stretched here across the pike."

Owen bent down again and felt of the rope.

"I couldn't be dead sure, of course," he said, smilingly; "but I've got a pretty good notion that if you went to the grocery store of Mr. Thatcher you'd find he carried this same style of clothesline in stock. It's an extra heavy kind, you notice, boys, and perfectly new. Perhaps he sold it as late as yesterday, now."



“What’s that?” exclaimed Steve; “d’ye mean to tell us this rope was bought right there in Carson, which we happen to know is twenty miles away from this place? It beats all how you figure things out, Owen. The old rope can’t talk; then how d’ye know? Has Mr. Thatcher got a trade mark on every yard of clothesline he sells? I don’t see anything like that, now.”

“Oh, somebody who lived in Carson might have bought it, you see,” began Owen; “one of us, for instance, though, of course, we didn’t. I’m only saying that to give you an illustration like. Yes, and bought this rope for the very purpose it’s been put to, here and now!”

“To trip us up and send us into the ditch?” ejaculated Bandy-legs.

“Nothing more nor less than that,” Owen answered, positively.

“Oh, t-t-there c-c-comes somebody!” cried Toby just then.

Instantly every eye was focused on the spot to which the excited boy was pointing. They could see the bushes moving, and that just back of them a figure was hastily advancing in their direction.

“Why didn’t we think to bring that gun belonging to Max?” muttered Steve.

“But we won’t need any such thing just now, fellows,” remarked Owen, quickly; “because it isn’t any enemy coming over there.”

"Sho, that's true enough; it's Max himself," admitted Bandy-legs.

They could all see this now, and possibly more than one of the boys breathed a bit easier when the fact became apparent that they were not fated to run up against some of the constables Bandy-legs had been talking about.

Max was coming as fast as possible. They saw that he was frowning, which could be set down as indicating disappointment. Possibly he was not at all satisfied over the barren result of his chase through the timber; the party after whom he had set out so strongly must have managed to get away, after all.

Presently he joined his chums, breathing hard after his run. The trees were inclined to grow thick together, and any one who tried to hurry through the timber would be kept pretty busy dodging their trunks.

"No go, Max; got away, eh?" asked Owen.

"Worse luck, he did," grumbled the returned runner, as he sank down and tried to rest a little.

"Lose him in the timber?" continued the other.

"Nope," Max replied, obligingly; "happened that they had the nice little game all laid out. There's another road over yonder, and it starts right down a steep slope. Easiest thing in the world to jump on and get to humming along without even starting

the spark. That's why you didn't hear any sound of an exhaust. Listen now, and you'll get it."

"Say, that's like a motorcycle!" exclaimed Steve, suddenly beginning to grasp the truth, which had been known to Owen all along.

"And it is a motorcycle, too!" asserted Bandy-legs, gravely, as though he might be exploiting a great principle.

"But there ain't any machines up in this here part of the country but ours, and— Hey, fellers, what a blooming lot of idiots we are, anyway!" cried Steve.

"Speak for yourself, Steve," laughed Owen, "I caught on long ago; and Max knew right in the start. That's why he hurried after the fellow so. He wouldn't have been likely to make that move if he thought it was one of Bandy's constables, for instance. Not much."

"And it was one of that sneaking crowd, was it, stretched this here rope across the road, just to trip us up and give a feller a broken collar bone, mebbe? Well, I like their nerve! How about that, Max?" demanded Steve.

"Now you're shouting close to the tree, Steve," replied the leader, who by this time had fully recovered his wind. "It was Ted Shafter himself. I glimpsed him a number of times when chasing after him. He had too big a start of me, and reach-

ing the other road, where Amiel and Shack were waiting all ready for a run, he just climbed on his machine, let her have her head down-grade and waved his hand back to me good-by, laughing in his disagreeable way. Now you know all I do, boys."



## CHAPTER X.

### THE QUEER ACTIONS OF STEVE.

“Just like that Shafter bunch!” exclaimed Steve, hotly.

“Ted never stops to think what might happen when he gets an idea in that thick old head of his,” declared Bandy-legs, indignantly. “Why, he might have upset Max and caused him a lot of sore bones, not to speak of smashing his wheel. He’s sure the limit when it comes to playing mean tricks that would never occur to anybody else.”

“A-a-anyhow, I’m g-g-goin’ to have his old r-r-rope,” and as Toby made this assertion he proceeded to unwind one end of the stout line, where it had been hastily wound several times around the tree, as Max reached a certain point where Ted believed he would be unable to stop his machine in time.

“That’s the ticket, Toby,” Steve went on to say, vindictively; “take it along with you. Who knows but what we’ll get a chance to pay those chumps back in their own coin. I’d have half a notion to do it, too.”

"You say they took the other road, Max?" asked Owen.

"Yes," replied his cousin; "I reckon it branches off from this one a little farther on. They must have stopped to rest a bit after making it. And then the idea struck Ted to try this trick, which they had made all preparations for, it seems. So he pushed through the neck of woods between the roads and lay in wait."

"J-j-just like a big f-f-fat spider waiting to g-g-gobble up a f-f-fly!" Toby said.

"Well, all the same, he didn't get any fun out of his game," remarked Bandy-legs.

"And has lost his fine rope, which Toby there is winding around his waist, as if he meant to keep the same," chuckled Owen.

"Let's get a move on, fellers," observed Steve, warmly.

Max eyed him curiously.

"Sounds like you expected that we meant to turn into that other road, Steve?" he observed.

"Well, don't we?" asked the one addressed.

"Why do you think we should?" continued Max.

"Ain't we going to chase that bunch, then?" asked Steve. "D'ye mean to say we've got to take all their rackets and never once lift a hand to strike back? Say, if you asked me for my opinion, I'd fix it so's we could give 'em the run of their lives right now. And if so be we happened to

ketch Ted, or one of his cronies, I'd be for doing something to make him sorry."

"You think you would right now, Steve," declared Max, smiling calmly; "but don't I know you too well to believe you'd hurt anybody in cold blood? Better let the whole business drop, I say. They didn't do us any real harm, beyond a little scare, and since they've scooted along that other road, perhaps we won't be apt to see anything more of the bunch. I hope not, anyhow. Owen, how does that strike you?"

"A sensible idea," replied his cousin.

"Toby, are you of the same opinion?" continued Max, wishing to have a majority back of him before deciding.

Toby shook his head a little aggressively; he also touched the rope he had been at so much pains to wind around his waist, as though lamenting the fact that if this plan of the leader's were carried out there might arise no opportunity to test it. But the influence of Max was strong over Toby.

"Y-y-yep, I'm with you," he finally managed to say, with a distinct sigh.

"Count me in," remarked Bandy-legs, seeing how the tide was going.

"Oh, if you're all inclined that way, move we make it unanimous," grumbled the hot-tempered Steve.

And accordingly they brought out their wheels ready to mount again. Max, as customary, was in

the lead, with Steve behind, and the others strung out after their usual fashion.

And as some little distance lay between each rider, all conversation was naturally stopped for the time being. Motorcycling is not social sport on this account; but judging from the clamor of tongues that broke forth with every halt, the boys made up for their compelled silence whenever they had the chance.

Just as Max had surmised, there was another road leading away from the one they followed, and it seemed to run in about the same general direction, he noticed. On this, at the forks, he had noted that the trail of their rivals had turned aside. Max only hoped that the second road did not take a notion to rejoin theirs again, some five or ten miles farther on. He would be better pleased if it headed off at an angle, making for some distant town or village. The less he saw of Ted Shafter the better Max would be pleased.

The country continued to be more or less given up to woods, with occasionally an outlying farm to break the dreadful monotony.

Everything seemed to be going along smoothly, and Max felt that he and his four chums had good reason to be satisfied with the progress they were making, without incurring unnecessary risks.

He had all the while been afraid of Steve, who was so impatient of restraint and desirous of making speed. But up to now Steve had behaved



fairly decent. True, he grumbled a little occasionally because they did not test their machines so as to find out just what they were capable of; but it went no further than this.

When Max was congratulating himself in this way, and virtually boasting of the good luck that had attended them, he must have neglected to "touch wood," after the customary boy fashion, to ward off ill luck. That was what he said himself afterwards, at any rate.

For he had really hardly allowed himself to feel a glow of pride concerning the working of his companions' machines, when his thoughts were rudely disturbed.

It was, as before, a sudden shout from Steve that broke in upon his reverie; but this time the cry did not happen to lie in the line of snakes. On the contrary, Steve seemed to be calling out in alarm, and beseeching Max to keep over on one side of the road, so as to allow him room to sweep past.

Almost unconsciously Max complied, although he could not for the life of him, on the spur of the moment, understand just why Steve should take a rash notion to head the procession, and was at first rather indignant.

He dared not turn his head to see, but could understand from the increased vibration from the exhaust of the other, that Steve's machine must have suddenly taken on high speed, and was bearing down on him like a racer.

Max held his breath with suspense. He could hear the others far back giving tongue, as though they were provoked to see what manner of trick Steve was up to. But now the on-coming machine was close behind him, and Max had all he wanted to do to hug one edge of the narrow road, in order that there might be no chance of a smash-up when the other started to pass by.

Then, all of a sudden, another thought came flashing into his mind. Perhaps Steve was not so much the sinner as sinned against; perhaps he had met with some sort of an accident, so that he could not shut off power and was actually compelled to race along at this mad speed.

The very idea thrilled Max and filled him with something akin to horror at the same time. A runaway motorcycle he had never heard of, but such a thing could happen, he guessed; and if it did come to pass, the chances for the rider coming out with a whole neck seemed slight indeed.

And then Steve whirled by like a hurricane. He was certainly going to a great clip and sitting crouched low in his saddle like a racer might. As he went past Max the boy shouted a few words which were only indistinctly heard by the amazed chum. Nor could Steve take chances by attempting to turn his head so as to send back any message.

Max again came into the middle of the road, hardly knowing what he ought to do, for the task of overtaking a runaway motorcycle presents dif-

ficulties that are not present when it is a frightened horse that is concerned.

Steve was going at such a mad clip that he quickly vanished up the road in a tremendous cloud of dust.

Then Max threw up his hand, making the signal he knew the others would understand meant he expected to stop. Presently all of them came together; and the looks upon the faces of Owen, Bandy-legs, and Toby told just what amazement had seized upon them after seeing how badly their impetuous comrade had behaved.

"It's a s-s-shame, that's w-w-what!" stammered Toby.

"Why, he's stark, staring crazy to take such big chances!" declared Bandy-legs.

"What did he say to you as he went flying past, Max?" asked Owen, suspiciously, as though he had an idea that if they knew this, the mystery would be explained.

"That's the trouble, fellows," admitted Max; "he went so fast, and his machine made such a racket, I just couldn't grab more'n a word or two of it."

"But you've sure got an idea what ailed the reckless feller?" queried Bandy-legs.

"Yes, I think I can give a guess pretty near the truth," replied Max, his face clouding up with anxiety. "He must have been trying to meddle with some part of his machine as he went along and got



something out of order so that the thing's running away with him."

"Gee, whiz!" gasped Bandy-legs; "can they do that, now? I was thinking mine was as quiet and easy managed as a cow; but if they rear up on their hind legs and act like they're crazy, just because you happen to touch the wrong button, I'll be a little more careful."

"Is it possible for the motor to get started, and refuse to stop, Max?" asked Owen.

"It certainly is, though I don't think it happens often," replied the other. "It might come about by the throttle getting open and disconnected in some way; or the magneto or battery switch being out of order. Then in an old wheel, a sooted cylinder or piston would cause the same thing, I understand. No matter what caused Steve's sudden trouble, he's been run away with and is in danger of being smashed up right now."

"But what can we do to help him?" asked Bandy-legs, hopelessly.

"I don't believe anything can be done, except he manages to get his engine under control himself," Max replied. "As I am the best rider in the bunch, because I've had experience, suppose I jump on and go after him as fast as I dare. The balance of you come along and keep on the watch to sight us."

"That's the ticket, Max, and we all hope you



find poor old Steve in the land of the living," said Bandy-legs, mournfully.

So Max pushed his machine along until he had the engine working, sprang into his saddle, and with a hurricane of explosions also disappeared up the road.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A MILE-A-MINUTE CLIP.

WHEN Max Hastings hurried along in that fashion, his heart did not beat high with hope. Truth to tell, it lay like lead within him; for he could not see how inexperienced Steve Dowdy could keep up that crazy pace long without coming to the end of his rope.

There were many curves to be negotiated, where even an old rider might find it wise to slow up, lest his wheel "skid," and he find himself in the bushes, with his motorcycle on top of him. Even Max abated some of his speed when he came to the first sharp curve, and his heart seemed to almost stop beating as he looked to see if there were any signs of poor Steve alongside the road beyond.

But the trail ran on, and hope again filled his heart.

"Bully old Steve!" he was muttering to himself, in admiration of the greenhorn's evident ability to make the difficult turn; "he's got his nerve along with him, anyhow, and that counts for a lot. He did skid some in whirling around there, but

made a wide sweep and held his own. More power to your elbow, Steve; do it some more, please!"

So as he rushed on at a great pace himself, his eyes constantly on the watch and his hands fast to the grips of his powerful handlebars, Max kept talking in this strain to himself. It seemed somehow to give him courage.

From time to time he allowed himself to look downward to the dusty road. In this way he was able to see the trail which the rapidly flying runaway motorcycle of Steve left behind to serve as a guide to any who came after.

The tread was unusually wide, showing at what a terrific pace the other must be heading onward. And each time Max successfully rounded a bend he would eagerly look beyond. He somehow cherished a wild hope that Steve might have finally succeeded in regaining control over his engine and come to a safe stop.

But nothing rewarded his vigil. At the same time he was glad that the trail continued on. As long as he could see that mark of the broad rubber tires in the dust before him, at least no catastrophe had as yet happened, and for that Max could give thanks.

"But how long can it last?" he was saying.

Luck had been with Steve thus far, but he could not expect it to keep right along with him; for minutes, yes, perhaps even hours, because the gas tank

would hold out until he had covered seventy more miles; but sooner or later there would crop up an ugly bend, marked especially dangerous on the motorist's road map; and then what Max feared must come to pass. Steve would meet his Waterloo there, poor old Steve who, for all his hot-headed nature, possessed qualities that made his chums love him well.

Once he went over with a horrible crash there could not, of course, be one chance in ten that he would survive the accident; and no more than one in fifty that he could escape serious hurts.

One thing Max noted in closely watching the trail of the rubber tread in the road dust, occasionally it seemed to wobble from side to side in a peculiar way, and this always happened when the line of travel was decidedly straight.

He believed he could guess the cause. Steve had kept his head about him even in such a nasty predicament, and whenever he thought he could manage the machine in the straight stretches he would lean over and try to work at the disconnected throttle, trying to temporarily repair the damage his carelessness had caused.

"Good for you, Steve!" Max said aloud, when he had this idea break in upon him. "You're all right, Steve, old fellow! Don't I hope you do manage to get repairs made, though, before anything



happens! Oh, what if he should meet up with one of those big hay wagons that fill the road!"

The very thought filled Max with horror, because he knew it would spell the end for poor Steve and his new motorcycle; likewise put a damper on all the hopes of a good time coming for his four chums.

Max himself was going at a fast pace pretty much all the time. He only slowed up while making some of the curves in the road. As a rule he took them at full speed. If Steve, who had never been on a motorcycle until recently, had proved himself able to negotiate those bends without a spill, surely one who had ridden as much as he, Max, had done in the past, should accomplish the same feat.

At another time and under more pleasant conditions, the even running of his engine must have filled the heart of the boy with delight. Its constant purr told of parts that did their work mechanically but positively; there was not the slightest friction or jarring sensation. In fact, a machine could not possibly work at high tension with better results than did his motor.

But, of course, Max had his whole attention taken up with worrying about Steve. He could think of nothing else, it seemed. Each new curve in the road as seen ahead gave him another spell of anxiety. And as he succeeded himself in passing around the same, how eagerly would his eyes scan,

first the farther side of the road, and discovering no wreck there, immediately seek out the plain dust trail again, with renewed hope.

Never in all his young life had Max been under such a tremendous strain as when he chased along in the wake of the runaway motorcycle, with his unlucky comrade clinging like a leech to the saddle.

Twice now had Max experienced a cold chill. This was on account of his discovering some object on the side of the road far ahead that looked horribly like a piled-up motorcycle wreck.

But each time, upon drawing closer, he had found out, to his exceeding great joy, that he was mistaken. In one instance it proved to be a bunch of weeds and brush; and in the other a pile of rotten rails, allowed to lie there after the owner of the field had renewed some broken parts of his fence.

As his thoughts turned back to the three other chums who had been left far in the rear, Max felt complete faith in the ability of Owen to follow such a plainly marked trail as he and Steve were leaving in the road dust.

All he wanted was to find Steve unhurt; the rest would not matter. Miles must have been passed over on this winding road. He wondered where it would take them eventually, and what might happen if Steve rushed through some outlying village or town at the mad pace he was still evidently keeping up, a mile a minute, perhaps.

And this was so unpleasant a subject that he at once resolutely put it out of his mind, nor would he allow himself to entertain thoughts along that line again.

Of course Owen and the others would have started again to follow. Yes, and the chances were that they would be proceeding at a much faster pace than before; so they could not be so very far distant even now.

Max wished they were alongside. In his distress of mind he would have been only too glad of a chance to confer with Owen, for instance. Two heads are generally better than one; and perhaps Owen might have some idea flash into his mind whereby Steve could be helped, though Max failed to see the faintest loophole now.

Another bend, and a particularly bad one at that! The strain was beginning to tell on stout-hearted Max, and if he felt it, what of Steve, whose neck was in constant danger?

But Steve was keeping his wits about him in the most extraordinary fashion and in a way to make the other Outing Boys proud of their chum.

"Never thought he had it in him," muttered Max, when he had made the curve successfully, to pick up the trail again beyond. "It goes to show what a fellow can do when he just has to. Steve, now, would have shaken his head and said he never could have turned a bend at such a speed; but he has, and



lots of 'em. Oh, will it ever let up! Must he just keep on going along till the last drop of gasoline has been used up?"

The thought made him grow cold again around the region of his heart.

If this same accident had happened to him, Max believed he could have solved the riddle and effected a remedy, stopping the engine in some other way; but it was a greenhorn who sat in the saddle, and Steve would keep working away on just the one line until he succeeded, or the end came.

When a hill was met, Max wondered why it had not occurred to Steve to run into the bushes alongside the road while his machine was making slower progress. But it did not seem to have done so; or else Steve was grimly determined to try and save his motorcycle, as well as his own precious bones.

And what dazzling speed he must have made down the incline on the other side! Max tried to see ahead when he himself was making the top, but trees concealed the road, so that he discovered nothing ere he, too, started down the incline with such rapidity that he was glad to shut off all power presently, the impetus of the heavy machine being enough to send him flying onward.

Once again now he was on the level. And Steve had survived that down-grade, too, for the trail still led onward, Max saw, to his delight.



Why, it was simply wonderful how Steve was carrying himself. No one could give him the name of "tenderfoot" after this. If he lived through the experience he must be entitled to an entrance into the higher classes, as one who had proven his right and title to experience in a rough school.

And then once more Max felt that chill around the region of his heart. He certainly did see something suspicious now on one side of the road. It looked very much like the sun's rays gleaming from the steel spokes of a motorcycle.

He was rushing down toward the spot, and would know in a fraction of a minute whether his worst fears were about to be realized or not.

Yes, it *was* surely a motorcycle, and painted the same color as that of Steve's, he now discovered; which fact added to his anxiety.

Then Max began to shut off power and made ready to apply the brake. He was coming close now, and a feeling of pleasure began to dominate his whole being, since he had made the discovery that the motorcycle was undoubtedly Steve's, and that it stood up against a tree quite whole.

That would indicate, Max realized, that his comrade must have finally succeeded in regaining control over his runaway engine, so that he had been able to bring it to a stop.

But Steve himself was certainly not in sight, so far as Max could see, as he applied his brake and

came to a halt just beyond the tree against which the well-known motorcycle of his chum rested so quietly, as though it were too meek to ever dream of cutting up tricks and running away with its rider.

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHAT THE TRACKS TOLD MAX.

“WELL, that *is* funny!”

Max said this to himself as he came back to where the machine of Steve rested so innocently against the tree, and still could see nothing of the late rider. He even put his hand on the motor and felt that it was burning hot, proving that the machine had only recently stopped running.

“Steve!” he called out.

There was no answer. A red-headed woodpecker flew from a dead stump close by and gave a jeering squawk. A bluejay in a tree beyond the swale also seemed to mock the call Max sent forth.

“Steve, oh, Steve!” once more rang out, this time louder than before.

Listening, and fully expecting to hear the cheery voice of his chum give reply, Max was more dumfounded than ever when only silence, dead silence, greeted him. The woods lay there, dark looking, and filled with unknown mysteries. Max was more or less appalled at their gloom; yet he had too sturdy a nature to give way to such fancies.

“Hello, there, Steve, where are you hiding? It’s Max calling! Show up here!”

As before, there was no reply, save another scream from the red-headed seeker after grubs in the dead wood near by.

Max changed his tactics. He could not for the life of him understand why Steve refused to answer. Surely the other could not imagine that his chums would be inclined to give him the laugh for what had happened. Why, if anything, he deserved the highest of praise for the really marvelous manner in which he had kept his runaway motorcycle on the winding road all these miles.

Oh, what if the poor fellow, after the excitement of his mad ride had passed, could have actually fainted! Max had known fellows to act in that way sometimes, no matter how brave they were in the face of the danger itself.

“That’s just what it means,” he said to himself, more to buoy up his courage than really because he believed it to be so; “poor Steve, he’s just keeled over after putting up that jolly ride. The excitement was too much for him, and maybe I’ll find him in the bushes right around here, as white as a ghost.”

No matter how little faith he really had in this new idea, Max started at once to look around for some signs of his missing chum.

He began at the standing motorcycle itself, for



Steve must have been there to prop it up in that way.

“Here’s the marks of his shoes, all right,” Max began to say, as he bent down, the better to see the trail; “and right at this point’s where he started away, heading into the woods. Walking strong, too, at the time. Don’t see any signs of wabbling, like a sick fellow. Now, I wonder what made Steve think of doing that? He must have known that some of his chums would come along, sooner or later, in search of him, when he propped his wheel up that way in plain sight. Then what tempted him to walk straight into the woods here?”

Max was standing there, musing after this manner, when suddenly he cocked up his ear as though to listen.

He had caught, far along the road, the familiar popping of an approaching motorcycle, than which there is nothing exactly similar, lest it be the exhaust of a gasoline launch.

“That’s Owen, ten to one,” Max muttered, a smile creeping athwart his glum features, for he was ready to welcome company; “yes, and now I can catch another machine coming along after him, perhaps a couple. The boys must have done some pretty stiff riding, for new beginners, to catch up on me like this.”

Turning to look down the road, he was just in time to see a rapidly driven motorcycle whirl

around the bend. Evidently Owen discovered him there at once, for he waved a hand to him.

Presently he came up and joined Max. And since the others were discovered coming along in splendid style, even Bandy-legs having made the turns without an upset, thanks to the caution impressed upon him beforehand by Max, nothing was said or done until all of them were assembled.

Of course, the three newcomers stared not to see Steve. There was his wheel, and no one could mistake it; but what had become of the rider, who had played his part in the exciting little drama with such remarkable success?

"What's become of him, Max?" asked Bandy-legs, as he looked first at the abandoned motorcycle and then stared at their leader.

"Y-y-yes, that's what we want to k-k-know," Toby went on.

"Say, Steve, show a leg here; what ails you?" Bandy-legs called out, just as if he fancied that the other were hiding, to play a silly trick on them.

When his demand failed to bring any sign of the missing one, Bandy-legs began to look frightened.

"Say, was he smashed, after all, and are you trying to break it to us by degrees, so we can stand the shock, Max?" he demanded, turning on the other.

For reply Max simply pointed to the wheel that stood there intact; and Bandy-legs understood immediately.

"Why, of course, I ought to 'a' known that," he declared. "He brought the bally old duck to a standstill himself, didn't he? And must have stood her there in the bargain. But where is he keeping himself, that's what?"

"Max has got an idea, I can see that," Owen remarked; for he knew the signs on his cousin's face meant something.

"Then d-d-do for g-g-goodness' sake t-t-tell us!" spoke up Toby, breathlessly.

"Hurry up your cakes, Max; I feel like my head was empty right now; can't think, after making all that hot ride," Bandy-legs remarked.

"Why, the thought that came to me was about this," began the other, slowly: "when Steve managed to bring his runaway motor back under control, and stop right here, he stood the machine up against this tree, just as we found it."

"Yes, that's a dead-sure thing," muttered Bandy-legs.

"I reckon he was heated to the limit," Max went on. "The terrible excitement, you understand, would make the sweat pour off him like everything. And as he stood on this very spot where we are now, he heard something that just tickled him."

"I k-k-know," broke out Toby; "running w-w-water! I hear it n-n-now!"

"Sure thing," added Bandy-legs, after his attention had been called to the fact.

"Well, you know that Steve has always got his



thirst along with him," continued Max; "so it would be only the natural thing for him to make a bee-line for that same singing brook, with the idea of getting his fill of cool water."

"Say, makes me thirsty just to hear you speak of it that way," declared Bandy-legs.

"Y-y-yes, that's s-s-so; but why don't he answer when we c-c-call out? H-h-hope you don't think he's g-g-gone and got d-d-drowned!"

Even Owen looked concerned again. Max, however, shook his head.

"Oh, say, what else will you fellows think has happened to Steve?" he remarked, a trifle impatiently. "As though a wide-awake fellow like that, able to conquer a wild runaway motorcycle, would be apt to tumble in a little creek and get done up? Of course I don't know why Steve won't answer us; but we'll soon be able to find out, or I miss my guess."

Max immediately turned his attention once more to the ground at his feet. And the others understood what he had in mind.

"He's going to track Steve, and see where the silly feller went," Bandy-legs hastened to remark.

"J-j-just what I was g-g-going to s-s-say," Toby asserted, looking provoked because his vocal cords played him so many tricks that he could seldom give voice to what he was thinking before one of his comrades had gone and said it for him.

"Hey, shall we leave the machines lying around



here, Max?" called out the now cautious Bandy-legs, after his comrade, who was moving off into the woods, his head still bent low.

"Yes, nothing will hurt them; but you might pull mine off the road, in case a wagon or a car came along, which wouldn't happen once in three hours, I guess," was the way Max answered.

And so it came to pass that the whole three of them followed after the one who seemed capable of following the tracks Steve had left when he wandered away from his stopping place.

Max was wondering whether the missing chum could have become mixed in his bearings after he arose from getting a drink. That was always possible, and might account for his wandering off away from the road. But Max knew only too well that it would not answer for Steve's strange silence when three times he, Max, had let out a cheery shout, which would undoubtedly be well known to the other.

The mystery was not yet solved, even though his first surmise, about Steve going to get a drink, proved true.

The trail was at least straight, Steve only moving aside in order to avoid contact with some standing tree that disputed his progress. This told Max that his guess must have been the true one; Steve knew what he wanted, and where it lay; for all the while the murmur of fretting water grew more

insistent, showing that the running brook must be very close at hand.

“It’s right ahead there, Max!” said Bandy-legs, so worked up that he just could not keep silent very long at a stretch; “I c’n see the alders that grow along the border in that ere little open place yonder. But I don’t glimpse that chum of ours yet, do you, Max?”

Bandy-legs was like many grown-up people; when more or less frightened he had to talk, just as though the sound of his own voice helped to keep up his spirits. And there are others who whistle when they feel a chilly sensation in the region of their hearts—passing a country graveyard at the middle of the night, for instance.

Max did not see the first sign of the one they sought; but he did not take the trouble to answer his companion. He was looking right and left, half expecting that Steve might suddenly rise up and confront them, with a grin on his face, possibly believing that he had played a smart joke on the balance of the Outing Boys, though Max believed he would have had some difficulty in forgiving him for it.

But three, four, five paces more Max took, yet nothing happened. The singing brook was now close by, and he could even glimpse its troubled waters in several places, where the bank happened to be unusually low, and unprotected by bushes.

It could hardly be possible that Steve was lying

there, concealed from their view, unless he purposely crouched behind some tree.

The trail still led straight onward, as though the musical call of the running water had started Steve to running. Max could tell this by the way the toes dug into the ground now, quite different from the impressions they made in the beginning, over by the road.

“Here she lies!” sang out Bandy-legs; “and now, Max, show us where he is!” Just as if the other had declared his ability to produce the missing boy, being possessed of the powers of a magician.

Max still deigned to make no reply to this dare. He bent over and kept straight along, following the tracks as though bound to make sure that Steve had reached the brook.

“Here’s where he dropped down on his knees and drank his fill,” he said, turning aside toward Owen, who was keeping close to his elbow, half holding his own breath with suspense and eagerness.

“Yes, I can see the plain impression of his two knees,” replied the other, as he, too, lowered his eyes to the soil at the border of the clear little stream.

This was not more than a foot across, though containing a fair amount of water that possibly in time found its way down to the Big Sunflower or the Elder, and eventually into the beautiful Evergreen River that passed the town of Carson.



"Don't tell me he could have drowned in that little toy crick!" ejaculated Bandy-legs, scornfully. "He must have got up again and walked straight away in the wrong direction. How about that, Max?"

But the other was on his knees by now. From his manner it was evident that he had made some sort of new discovery, and which might perhaps account for the strange silence of Steve Dowdy.

They saw him part the grass and peer at certain marks he had discovered there. Owen, Toby, and even the talkative Bandy-legs immediately became deeply impressed by the grave manner in which Max did this. They seemed to guess through some instinct that he was on the eve of announcing the truth to them. And each second of delay only served to add to their nervous strain.

"Oh, what do you think it can be?" said Bandy-legs, as he gripped Owen by the arm convulsively.

"I don't know, but hold your horses a bit and he'll tell us," replied the other, and his manner told that he had the utmost confidence in his cousin.

Toby said nothing. Perhaps he had lost his power of speech entirely by reason of the excitement; or it might be the poor fellow knew his failing and had the good sense to hold his tongue. But he was using his eyes for all they were worth, and while his speech might be defective, Toby had as good a pair of eyes as any fellow among the Outing Boys.



Max had by this time apparently made up his mind as to the matter in which he was so deeply interested. He arose to his feet, and when he turned his face full upon his chums once more, they saw that it was flushed.

Max was angry. Seldom had those fellows looked upon him when he gave such a positive exhibition of suddenly aroused passion. He was gritting his teeth together, as those who possess strong natures are apt to do when trying to repress their feelings.

"This is just too much, and I won't stand for it!" he declared, and his words only served to further mystify Bandy-legs and Toby; perhaps Owen, being keener of intellect and better able to put two and two together, may have been able to give a shrewd guess as to what Max was referring; but the others only gaped, and looked, and waited for further explanations from their gifted leader, who could, it seemed, read the signs of the trail, if not as well as the famous old Leatherstocking in the Cooper tales, at least with some show of understanding.

"The idea of our running smack into that bunch again; why, I never heard the beat of it!" Max was saying, half to himself and partly for their benefit. "I was hoping they'd gone miles away; and here the plagued old roads had to come together again, just in time for them to discover our chum taking his drink, and pounce on him while he was down flat on his stomach."

“Is that really so?” asked Owen, angrily. “Would they dare do a thing like that, d’ye think, Max?”

“Well, some fellows did it, because you can see other tracks around besides the ones Steve made. And see, here’s where he rolled about on the ground, like as not with one of ’em on him. After this I’m going to forget all I ever said about keeping the peace. They’ve got to be taught a lesson, that’s what!”

Toby and Bandy-legs stared harder than ever, first at Max and then at each other.

“Oh, my!” gasped the former, nor would he commit himself any further.

“D’ye hear that, Toby?” grated Bandy-legs, ferociously; “he says Ted and his low-down crowd have been around again and jumped on our chum Steve. Like’s not they’ve carried him off a prisoner, too. Boys, this is too much! We’ve got to get after that bunch with a hot stick, and the sooner we start the better it will please me.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### TOBY ON GUARD.

“I RATHER think we all feel about the same as you do, Bandy-legs,” remarked Owen, who was considerably worked up for a fellow who, as a rule, managed to keep his temper in a way that always mystified impulsive Steve.

“Then let’s go right away,” added the boy with the short legs; “every minute we hang around here, gassing and making threats, is just so much time wasted. Why, we ought to be warm on the trail right now.”

Max nodded his head as he went on to say:

“That’s right for you, Bandy-legs, and we can’t get off any too soon to please me; but you seem to forget something.”

“Huh, what’s that?” demanded the other, quickly.

“The wheels,” Max replied.

“What of ’em?”

“You notice that those fellows went through the woods, and if you look sharp you’ll see that over there it’s a regular jungle. I’d like to see you pushing that heavy machine of yours through that mess, over roots and everything,” Max went on.

Bandy-legs shrugged his broad shoulders.

"All right," he chirped immediately; "that means we've just got to leave 'em behind for a little spell."

"Five wheels like these are worth a heap of money; and a pack of Wandering Willies in the shape of hoboes would think they were a bully good find. No, all of us can't go, that's sure," and Max shut his jaws together in a way that meant his mind was fully made up.

Both Toby and Bandy-legs looked woe-begone at once. They understood that this new arrangement meant one of them must hang out in the neighborhood of the precious wheels, while the balance of the crowd hunted the kidnappers of poor Steve.

Max had a way of settling all such problems off-hand.

"Here," he said, picking up a couple of small twigs, one being longer than the other, and concealing them in the palm of his hand; "you draw, Bandy-legs, and remember, the shorter one stays."

"Oh, all right!" grumbled the boy addressed, accustomed to rendering obedience to the one they had elected as leader; "I'm willing to take my chances, but I did want to be along the worst kind. I owe that Ted Shafter more'n one kick for what he's done against me in the past. Hold 'em up, Max, and here goes."

He did not hesitate in the least, but as if his mind had been made up to accept the result, no matter



how discouraging it might be, selected one of the sprouts.

Max immediately held up the other, to show that Bandy-legs' luck had not deserted him, apparently. But had he known what was going to happen, perhaps Bandy-legs might not have set up such a triumphant laugh.

"What d'ye think about that, now!" he cried. "After all, it's Toby has to stay behind, and lose all the fun. Come on, fellers, let's get busy. We're losing seconds that ought to mean a heap to us. Max, get your peepers set on the trail, and let's see what you can do. Remember, we've got faith in you, old boy!"

Toby saw his three chums go off with a sinking of the heart. He did seem to always get the small end of the stick when it came to a question of luck. Why could not Bandy-legs have drawn the shorter one and remained behind?

Max seemed capable of following the trail left by those who had made Steve accompany them with little trouble. But the fact of the matter was, that Steve had shown uncommon good sense in the matter and helped to make things easy for his pursuing chums.

His captors had probably caused him to remain silent when Max called out, since they could hardly have been beyond hearing of his shout; but they did not know that Steve, deprived of the power of

speech, was taking the greatest delight in dragging his feet as he walked, just as though he had been lamed in his wild ride.

But Steve had another motive in doing this. It was to leave as broad a trail as possible, to assist Max when the tracker of the Outing Boys got down to work. For, of course, Steve must have felt positive that his friends would leave no stone unturned in their efforts to find and rescue him.

Poor Toby heaved a big sigh as he saw his three friends vanish from sight in the thick undergrowth, where the trees grew close together. He did hate the worst way to be left behind; not that Toby was in the least bit afraid, because the boy happened to be far from timid; but he believed the others were bound to have a "bully good time," as Bandy-legs would have expressed it; while naturally he, as the guardian of the wheels, could only sit there and "suck his thumbs," so to speak.

For a short time after the others had vanished from his sight Toby, by straining his ears, believed he could catch certain little rustling sounds that were apt to mark their passage through the undergrowth.

How eagerly he listened to these slight noises, because they told of the presence of his comrades. Finally even these signs died completely away and Toby was surrounded by complete silence.

He threw himself down in the bushes to reflect

and wait until his friends once more came along. Of course, his first thought was of Steve and he did hope most earnestly that the abductors might be overtaken.

After that it was only natural for Toby to let his mind become occupied with his own affairs, which were certainly in rather a mixed-up condition. Still, since his talk with Max, Toby had begun to draw in fresh hope. Perhaps Mr. Hastings, when he went to the city, might make some discoveries that would bring about a change—perhaps there *was* a will to be seen in the place where such documents were recorded, and the truth might be made known!

What would cross old Uncle Nathan say when he found out that his affairs were being investigated by those who had taken an interest in the orphan? Toby, being only a boy, and a much abused one at that, could not be expected to feel any great amount of respect or sympathy for the miserly old man who had treated him so badly ever since he could remember. And, hence, it was only natural that he should softly chuckle at the picture he mentally drew of Uncle Nathan's astonishment.

What was that? It sounded like an echo to his gurgle of amusement; and yet that could hardly be, because he was sure he had made no sound loud enough to be heard a dozen feet away.



Perhaps it was some gray squirrel frisking around on the ground among the few dead leaves, trying to unearth a store of hickory nuts he had hidden last fall, and forgotten about until now.

Toby raised himself on one elbow and listened. He was simply curious to know the origin of that sound which, to his imagination, had seemed to resemble a partly suppressed human sneeze.

A minute, two, three of them crept along. Toby could hear that saucy bluejay scolding his mate over in the pine top not far away. And the industrious woodpecker was hammering away at a decayed tree top, searching for some fat juicy grub that, in its innocence, might step to the front door of its house to see who was making such a loud noise, only to be gobbled up by a pair of ready mandibles.

Something was certainly moving near by. Toby heard a queer shuffling sound, and was even able to locate the identical quarter from whence it came.

The boy felt a sensation like the prickling of innumerable pins that seemed to pass all over his body. That was doubtless his idea of a genuine *thrill*.

Immediately he began to think of all manner of strange things, from a wildcat to a boa constrictor; although, of course, he knew that there were none of these last to be met with in North America, un-



less they had escaped from a traveling show and menagerie, such as had visited Carson only two weeks before, giving the boys of the town something to talk about for days.

Yes, there was no longer any doubt in Toby's mind but that *something* was moving over there!

He raised his head just a little further, being very careful to make no move calculated to attract attention. And now he could see that the long grass was shaking, as the creeping object parted it.

"G-g-gosh!" was what Toby whispered to himself; and that one word seemed to express all the astonishment, alarm and curiosity that boy could ever betray.

As he watched with strained eyes he began to make out the uncertain proportions of the object that was moving forward toward the very spot where the five beautiful motorcycles were clustered. And Toby saw that in all probability, if the unknown kept straight on, he must pass very close to where he himself crouched, his presence either unknown or unheeded.

Then suddenly a bright idea flashed into the mind of Toby. Really, it brought such a relief along with it that he shook a little with silent laughter.

Why, of course, how silly it was of him to think of anything else. To be sure, this must be a part of the clever plan of those unscrupulous Shafter boys

to do their rivals an evil turn. Toby had a mighty poor opinion of the whole lot and, like Bandy-legs, would hardly put anything past them.

So, as he lay there, he reasoned it out somewhat on this plan: Two of the other fellows had pounced on Steve, who had been led away a prisoner, but with some definite purpose in view. And Toby believed he had discovered the true reason for the abduction. *It was to draw the Outing Boys off in pursuit!*

Such a move would likely leave their motorcycles unprotected; and Ted, who had doubtless been hovering near by, intended doing the precious wheels some damage, in order to injure the prospects for a pleasant day on the part of his rivals.

It all seemed to fit in nicely, according to Toby's way of looking at things. To be sure, he wondered why Ted, if he thought all of them had gone away, should take this bother of creeping up so carefully. But then that might only be the other's way of accomplishing things.

What ought he to do about it?

One thing sure, Toby was determined that he would never lie there and see any damage come to those new motorcycles, which he and his chums depended on to give them an unlimited amount of pleasure during the long vacation that had hardly more than started.

Had the entire Shafter crowd shown up, still

Toby would have defied them, and done his level best to protect the wheels. And since this was only a single fellow, even though the dreaded Ted himself, he would not show the white feather.

Then an idea came sifting through his mind as he continued to crouch there and listen to the increasing rustle that announced the coming of the unknown.

Suppose he found a good chance to spring on the back of the crawler, would he not be silly to decline to take advantage of the opportunity?

No sooner had this brilliant idea come to Toby than he set his teeth firmly together and resolved to do his prettiest, in order to give the sneaking Ted the surprise of his life.

Inch by inch did Toby begin to raise himself. His idea was to roll over on his stomach and then work his body upward until he was really on his toes, though still crouching close to the ground.

When he had finally succeeded in accomplishing this difficult feat, he realized that he was not going to have a great while to wait before putting his little scheme into practice. Like many of the other boys in Carson, Toby had in the past been bullied more or less by the hulking chap, Ted Shafter. He had even feared the rough fellow at times; and then again resolved that some fine day he would try to give him the beating he deserved.

And now the chance seemed to have come, al-



though it required all the nerve which Toby could summon to carry him through.

He had seen a cat crouch in order to spring on a sparrow, and noted the fine way in which Tabby would gather her muscles for the final jump. So Toby tried to imitate the bird-catcher as he prepared to make his leap upon the back of the creeping bully of Carson.

Toby did not dare raise his head to look, lest he in turn be discovered; so he had to use his ears alone in order to inform him when the other was close enough—that, and the waving of the tall grass.

Finally the decisive moment arrived, and Toby launched himself forward with all his energy. No doubt it was a splendid leap, that would do him credit when the story was afterwards told around some camp fire, at which he sat with his chums.

Toby landed fairly and squarely upon the back of the prowler, pinning him to the ground with the force of his onset and causing him to give vent to a grunt, as the wind was forced from his body at the same time.

But Toby had himself received a tremendous shock.

He made a discovery that must have added considerably to the thrills that were chasing all over him. Instead of the bully of Carson, he found himself sprawled upon the back of a small but vigorous man; and one who was dressed in the well-



known striped clothes which Toby had once seen on the State prisoners over at the penitentiary, when his uncle had taken him to town to a strange lawyer to sign some paper a year or so back.

It must be an escaped convict who had been bent on stealing one of their wheels.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FOLLOWING THE TRAIL.

MEANWHILE the other three Outing Boys were pushing along through the timber, bent upon overtaking the abductors of Steve, if possible, and effecting his rescue.

Of course they understood that it must be in a spirit of meanness that those fellows had carried their chum off, and not because they really meant to do him any bodily injury. The disappearance of Steve would of course put an end to the good times the little party expected to have; and this was what would doubtless appeal to such vindictive fellows as the Shafters.

Perhaps Max, now, had looked a little deeper into the matter than the rest of them. His decision about not leaving the motorcycles unprotected would indicate such an idea. He may have guessed the same thing that later on came to Toby, as he lay there in the long grass and heard the rustling that told of a prowler's approach.

Max found little if any difficulty in following the trail. His two comrades from time to time whis

pered to each other concerning their admiration because of his prowess; but really Max did not take much credit for what he was doing. Steve, good, wise, far-seeing Steve, had made things so easy for him by dragging his feet from time to time.

The one thing that puzzled Max was how Ted and his fellows had happened to be in the vicinity when Steve pushed into the woods in order to get a drink. It was next door to a miracle, Max decided; but then he knew how often such things happen, that are really beyond any explanation.

Perhaps, now, the other road was not far away, and the Shafter crowd had stopped to rest up a bit, when they, too, caught the gurgle of that running water, making them remember the fact that they were exceedingly dry and thirsty.

And in getting a drink they had caught sight of Steve pushing his innocent way along through the undergrowth in the direction of the streamlet.

Of course, the sight of him suggested some mean idea; which they started to carry out while Steve was lying flat on his stomach, drinking his fill at the little brook and never dreaming of danger.

And now they were purposely making it an object to keep on through the dense timber, although their own wheels were not far away. They wished to give Max and the others a long hunt for their missing chum; who would possibly be left tied to a

tree after Ted had considered that he had enjoyed his society quite enough and jeered at him to his heart's content.

Bandy-legs brought up the rear, though he managed to keep close to Owen.

As usual it was very hard for the boy to keep still. Bandy-legs liked to hear himself talk, the others always declared; and only under the most severe threats could he be kept silent. It was punishment for him to hold his tongue.

So now as they pushed along at quite a good pace, from time to time Bandy-legs would manage to say something. Owen cautioned him about talking aloud, and hence he would try to whisper, though as a rule it ended in a hoarse croak; for Bandy-legs was so excited it affected his vocal cords.

Now and then Max would find himself up against a little puzzle. The trail appeared to vanish, as the ground became unusually hard or stony.

At such times he was compelled to exercise his judgment, and in every instance this seemed to hold good. But then, of course, those ahead were green-horns, and had no idea as to how a trail might be blinded when the presence of trackers was suspected. Those hard places would have afforded just the chance needed in order to throw a trailer off the scent.



But they were heading in almost a straight line, as though a little afraid on their own account, lest they get lost. This made it easy for the boy who led the pursuit.

"How many are there got hold of Steve, Max?" Bandy-legs asked, after they had been going on so for quite some time.

"Just two," replied the other, over his shoulder; for he thought questions of this nature ought to be answered.

"And say, can you tell who they are?" demanded the puffing boy with the short legs, who was having the time of his life trying to keep up with the others, since he had to take three steps to their two.

"I think it's Toots and Beggs," Max went on to say.

"Of course, you've got good reason to believe that, Max?"

"Well, I've paid some attention to the kind of shoes they wear, particularly Ted, and he doesn't seem to be along with the party right now," was the way Max continued to impart information.

"But whatever are they goin' to do with our chum, toting him away up here in the woods?" grumbled Bandy-legs, as he picked himself up, after tripping over a root that managed to get in the way of his feet.

"Yes, Max, tell us, if you've got any sort of idea; I've bothered my head more'n a little about that same thing myself," Owen remarked.

Max fell back a trifle so that they could join him, though he would not consider such a thing as wasting time by stopping.

"I have been running it over in my mind, fellows," he admitted; "and this is the best I can make out of it. Ted Shafter knows something about this country up here, because he has an uncle living in this region, I understand, and more than a few times he's been sent up here by his father to visit, just to get him away from Carson till the bad odor of some of his pranks blew over."

"Say, that's right, Max, even if I didn't think of it before you spoke," declared Bandy-legs, eagerly. "I know that for a fact, and his uncle's name is Benners, too. Funny how you always think of everything, while the rest of the bunch is half asleep."

"Well, my idea is that these fellows know where they are aiming for, and that Ted has coached them. Perhaps right now he's gone on ahead to wait for them; but, anyhow, I'm dead sure one of these fellows is carrying a compass, because he never heads any way but due north. No boy could do that in the woods unless he was experienced and up to snuff."

"Then you reckon they're bound for the farm of Ted's uncle?" pursued Bandy-legs.

"They might have been when they set out," Max went on to say; "but right now I've an idea it's some other place they expect to reach. Perhaps there's some old cabin in the woods Ted knows about. He might have started the other fellows on ahead, and they just ran across our chum through dumb luck. And, now, that's only guessing on my part. I'm just as much in the dark as the rest of you fellows."

"Bet you it's mighty near the facts," declared Bandy-legs. "It does beat the Dutch how you can cleave close to the line right along! Cabin in the woods, eh? Looky here, come to think of it, I remember hearing Shack Beggs tell about the fun him and Amiel and Ted used to have in just such a place, the time they came up here together, and stayed a whole month. Ted's uncle was mighty glad to take the lot to town in his wagon in the end; they nearly set him crazy with their cuttin' up."

"Well, that ought to do for now, Bandy-legs," remarked Max. "Suppose we stop talking for a while and pay attention to business."

"Just tell me first, please, Max, is the trail gettin' any warmer, and do you reckon we're comin' up with the tough lot?" the other pleaded.

"All I can say is, we seem to be holding our own,



which ought to look good enough for a party of tenderfeet."

Max increased the distance between himself and the others, as though in this way he wanted to let Bandy-legs know that he must not distract his attention any longer. If he must occasionally say something in a whisper, then Owen would have to stand for it.

And in due time the boy with the short legs realized that he was weakening himself in wasting so much breath. Gradually, then, he ceased to even speak in a low tone and simply grumbled whenever he fell over a clinging vine or out-cropping root.

Ten minutes later and Max stopped short. As he did so he held up his finger in a warning way that excited Bandy-legs to the limit. Evidently, Max had made some sort of discovery; for after bringing them to a halt, he dropped down behind the screen of bushes as though desirous of hiding.

Of course the others followed suit. And then both of them started to creep forward, with the intention of joining Max. They were filled with curiosity and wondering what their leader had seen.

"What is it?" whispered Bandy-legs, close to the ear of Max.

"Look yonder and you'll see," was the reply.

"Cricky, a cabin, as big as life!" exclaimed Bandy-legs. "And a tumble-down old shack, too!



Bet you anything that's just the place I heard them fellers talkin' about. They camped out in it for a whole week, cooked their meals and played Injun, they said. Well, just to think of our follerin' the trail all the way up here!"

While saying all this Bandy-legs was at least smart enough to confine himself to a whisper. But even then Owen thought he ought to be warned, and so he told him to keep quiet.

"But I saw Shack right then!" the other persisted in adding.

"Oh, they're on deck, all right," remarked Max, carefully toning down his own voice, "the whole three of 'em most likely."

"And have they got our chum in that old shack?" asked Bandy-legs, whom it was next to impossible to shut off.

"I wouldn't be surprised a bit," replied Max, shaking his head as he gave Owen a suggestive look, as much as to say the task of quieting Bandy-legs was more than he could manage.

"Then why don't we rush up and get him away?" demanded the other, showing some of the same impatience Steve usually monopolized.

"Oh, lots of reasons," answered Max.

"Name 'em!" continued Bandy-legs, belligerently.

"First place they could see us coming, I reckon, and shut the door in our faces. Then we'd be up

a stump, with Steve a prisoner in the shack, along with Ted and his crowd," Max obligingly remarked.

"Any other reason?" persisted the other.

Max shrugged his shoulders and sighed. Evidently he could not satisfy this hungry questioner except by a full explanation. Sometimes the shortest way across is to take heroic measures. Alexander cut the Gordian knot, Max remembered, history told.

"We want to know more about what they're doing here," he continued. "There are three of them, you remember; and down in Carson they've got the reputation of being the handiest set with their fists in the whole town. Now, they might make it interesting for us three if we tried to pitch right in and tackle the bunch. My idea is to try and use strategy."

"Whew, that sounds good!" muttered Bandy-legs, visibly impressed by what Max had just told him. "Reckon I c'n give a good guess what that means. Ketch one of 'em asleep and make him a prisoner. That'd reduce the crowd to a couple, and the three of us ought to make good then. Is that it, Max?"

"Just about; and now please let me alone, Bandy-legs; I want to think up a scheme to spring on those chaps. Listen to how they are laughing inside the cabin. I hope now they don't try to

torture poor Steve any by sticking sharp sticks into his legs. That Ted is almost as bad as any wild Indian I ever heard of."

"Me to find a good club right away," muttered the aroused Bandy-legs, beginning to cast about him without loss of time, and it was evident that the last words of Max had thrilled the boy, because he had a sincere liking for Steve and was ready to go to any extreme in order to stand up for this chum.

Five minutes later Max turned around and they could see that something akin to a broad smile had settled on his face.

"I think I've got it," he said, in a low tone, as the others crept closer in order to hear what he had to say. "We can thank our enemies for the idea, because it was suggested by what they did to Steve. Look close by and you'll see that there's a fine little spring bubbling up out of the ground. Long ago it used to supply water for the people who lived in this cabin. And sooner or later Ted himself, or one of the others, will be sure to come down here to get a drink."

"Oh, fine!" chuckled Owen, who caught the idea immediately.

"It's sure a jim-dandy idea!" echoed Bandy-legs; "all we got to do is to lie low and wait till he bends down. Then his name is Dennis, if ever you let me get just one good crack at him with this

hickory club," and he waved before them a stout cudgel he had discovered.

But Max shook his head at the impulsive one.

"All we want to do is to rescue Steve," he said, impressively; "though possibly we may have to be a bit rough about it; and now let's hide ourselves and wait."



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SHOE ON THE OTHER FOOT.

APPARENTLY Max was a pretty fine prophet, for before ten minutes had passed by some one came along the trail from the old cabin, evidently with the intention of slacking his thirst, for the day was hot.

It turned out to be Ted Shafter himself, just as Max had more than half expected would be the case.

He seemed to have no suspicion of danger, but sauntering along, threw himself down beside the spring. Then he lay flat, the better to sup up some of the clear, sparkling water.

This was just the chance the three lurking Outing Boys wanted. Max led off, and threw his weight on Ted, pinning the astonished fellow to the ground. Nor did Max stop there, but managed to get hold of Ted's throat, so that he could partly choke off any outcry the other might attempt to make.

Both Owen and Bandy-legs came to his assistance, and between them, with much threatening, they succeeded in tying Ted up and fastening a

handkerchief across his mouth in such a way that he could not yell.

Ted was about as furious a fellow as they had ever seen. He realized, after all, the tables had been smartly turned, and that instead of their having the laugh on Max and his chums, the shoe was on the other foot.

Bandy-legs danced around the prisoner, shaking his war club in a menacing manner, as if to warn the other what he might expect if he gave them any more trouble.

"And now let's get up to the cabin and see what they've done with our Steve," Max went on to say, for he was anxious to learn all.

"Better hunt up something, too," suggested Bandy-legs, as he thrust his club up close to the faces of his chums for their admiration.

"Not half a bad idea, eh, Owen," remarked Max; and thereupon they looked about until the whole three had armed themselves in a similar fashion.

Then the advance was begun. As the cabin was close by, and none of the inmates seemed to suspect their presence, there was no difficulty encountered in advancing upon the run-down old building.

Voices were soon heard, coming from within, and Max quickly decided that Shack and Amiel must be taunting Steve, who was being held a prisoner in this ridiculous fashion, to suit the ideas of Ted, who secretly yearned to go out West and be a genuine cowboy—he had once seen the Buffalo Bill

Show, and ever since had but one longing, which was to become a broncho buster.

The three boys crept up to the open door of the cabin; indeed, it could not be anything but an opening, since the door itself lay on the ground, destitute of hinges or lock. "Well," Shack was saying, in his nasty way, as Max and his two chums arrived at the opening, "yuh won't be so sassy, Steve Dowdy, after yuh been here a hull day, a-wantin' some grub the worst kind. Ted, he's jest bound tuh break up that club o' yourn; and w'en he sez he's a-goin' tuh do a thing, you bet he will."

"Bah, rats! go chase yourselves for a lot of sapheads!"

That was Steve talking, and the sound of his voice surely gave Max a pleasant thrill. Apparently, then, these rough fellows had not been able to cow good old Steve in the least, for all they had held him a prisoner and possibly treated him in anything but a gentle way.

"Talk's cheap," came in another voice, a soft oily one that Max knew belonged to Amiel Toots; but you just wait and see what happens to you, Steve Dowdy. When Ted gets things workin' you're due for a surprise, you hear me talkin'? 'Spect to see them chums of yours drop in on us, hey? Why, they couldn't find you in a thousand years, Steve, believe me."

"That's where you're wrong, Toots; we're here right now!"



Max said this. He was already halfway through the doorway as he spoke, and the other two clung close to his heels.

Shack and Amiel, astonished and angered beyond measure, sprang to their feet. They were ready boys with their fists, but this was a time when they found themselves up against a proposition they could not handle.

"Keep back, or you're due for a pair of broken heads!" warned Max, as he flourished his stick threateningly.

"Oh, please let me just have a little fun!" whimpered Bandy-legs, whom Owen had great difficulty in holding back. "It ain't fair to let 'em off so easy after what they did to our chum Steve. Stir 'em up, Max, and give me just one little whack. I'd settle Shack all right; I'd make Amiel see a thousand stars, yes, and a few moons in the bargain."

"Ted, Ted!" both of the others started to yell at the top of their voices; for they were accustomed to believing that Ted Shafter could do almost anything; and in their minds his very presence was a tower of strength.

At that the three intruders began to laugh loudly. Bandy-legs even mocked the calls of the pair of young rascals.

"Ted, oh, Ted! Come and help us, please! Hurry up, Ted, and chase these bad fellows out of here! But Ted has troubles of his own right now, let me



tell you, boys; fact is, he's tied hand and foot, and got my nose-wipe over his mouth, so he can't even give a sneeze, let alone a war-whoop. Ted, poor old boy, went to the wall, or the spring, once too often. He's as helpless as a baby. Now dry up, you!"

The two who had been caught so neatly in a trap began to feel alarmed by this time. They whimpered, just as cowards usually do when cornered.

"Say, we didn't mean to do anything to Steve," Amiel started to say. "It was all a joke, you see; we wanted to make you think he'd been carried away by some hobo crowd. We was goin' to let him loose after a bit, when we'd got all the fun we wanted out'n the thing."

"Yes, you were, not!" declared Steve, who was now discovered bound, in what had once been a sleeping bunk." Hello, fellows, get me loose here, right away, please. I've got a little business in hand, and I'm just itching to get at it."

Max knew what he meant, but he did not wish to have impetuous Steve pounding his late captors, however much they might deserve it.

"You fellows get out of this in a hurry," he said, stepping aside so that they had free access to the open doorway. "And you can't run any too fast, once you get out of here. Owen, you cut Steve loose, will you?"

Both Shack and Amiel waited, not on the order of their going, but made a leap for the doorway.

Bandy-legs was watching and did not mean to be wholly cheated out of what he considered his dues.

He made a sweeping blow, and Shack, who was in the lead, gave a howl as the club caught him a terrific whack across the last part to get through the exit. Amiel hesitated, and this cost him dear, for if he had instantly followed his companion, the wielder of the cudgel could not have found time enough to wind up for another swing.

"Come right along and take your medicine, Amiel," grinned Bandy-legs, as he waved his club backward and forward, just as he always did his baseball bat when facing the pitcher. "Jump and take what I give you, or stay and settle with Steve! And he's nearly loose now, Amiel. Take your choice!"

So Amiel, uttering little yelps of terror even before he was struck, finally made a wild dash to get out. Bandy-legs was not caught napping, as the shriek that the other gave testified.

Not satisfied, the wielder of the club chased after the two flying ones.

"I want to see they don't set Ted free!" he called back as he ran.

But there was no danger, for just then Shack and his mate were only thinking of placing as much ground between themselves and the cabin as possible.

Later on, Steve having been rubbed down so

that the circulation was restored to his cramped limbs, they all went over to the spring.

Ted Shafter was lying there, looking glum and black. He scowled in a hateful way as he saw them come along. Max immediately removed the gag that kept Ted from speaking.

"We're going to leave you here, Ted," he remarked, coolly. "When you feel like it just shout out for your two friends to come back and set you free. You're getting off pretty cheap this time; but just keep on trying to bother us, and see what you'll be up against. Perhaps we've had some fun out of this thing as well as you. And, Ted, they do say the fellow that laughs last laughs loudest. Give him one to remember us by, fellows!"

Of course he meant a taunting laugh; but Steve chose to misunderstand the words, for he ran in and gave the bound Ted a good hearty kick.

"Hold on," cried Max, "I wouldn't do that sort of thing, Steve."

"He knows I can't hit back," said Ted, savagely. "You just wait and see what you get for that kick, Steve Dowdy. I ain't done with you yet, by a long sight."

"And we'll fix you if you as much as lay a finger on our chum!" flashed Bandy-legs, angrily. "An injury to one is an injury to all, hey, fellows?"

"Come on, boys," said Max, anxious to get away where he could no longer look upon that enraged face of the helpless bully, almost frothing at the



mouth because of his inability to work those ready fists of his.

So they walked away, noticing as they went, however, that the three motorcycles belonging to Ted and his companions were actually in sight. This would seem to indicate that Shack and Amiel must have gone for their wheels after arriving at the cabin, where Ted had been waiting for them in advance.

It seemed a long walk back to the place where their own machines had been left in charge of Toby. They were getting near the spot when loud voices close by attracted their attention. Then three men in blue uniforms were seen approaching, and to the astonishment of the boys these parties hailed them.

"We belong to the penitentiary over at Waltham," one who seemed to be the leader remarked, as they came up; "and we're hunting for a desperate convict who managed to escape yesterday. He's a small-sized man, but a terror. Have you seen anything of a zebra-striped fellow anywhere in the woods to-day, boys?"

"No, sir, not a thing," replied Max, promptly. "We've been up quite a ways, too, chasing after a set of rowdies who had made one of our chums prisoner, just out of spite. We've got our motorcycles not far away from here, and some lunch tied to them. If it happens now that you gentlemen are hungry, why, it's just noon, and I think we'd



have enough all around. They're welcome, eh, boys?"

"Sure they are; and I'm as hungry as a bear, so come on, fellows!" cried Steve.

"That's mighty nice of you, young fellow," remarked the officer in blue; "we didn't think to fetch anything to eat along. And we'll take you at your word, hoping to return the favor some day."

"Hello! there's the wheels, boys!" exclaimed Bandy-legs a little while later; "but I don't see anything of our chum, Toby. Hello, there, Toby, show up!"

In answer there came a strange mumbling, and then the word:

"C-c-can't!"

"Something's holdin' him!" cried Bandy-legs. "Looky there, I c'n see his legs kicking in the grass. Hurry up, fellers, and help poor old Toby!"

They ran forward, boys and men in a bunch. And then cries broke forth when they saw Toby sprawled upon the back of a figure that was dressed in the zebra-like garments of a convict.

"He's gone and caught our escaped bird! Plucky boy that!" cried one of the wardens; at which the other boys stared as though they could hardly believe their eyes.

Of course the runaway from the State penitentiary was soon hand-cuffed, and rendered harmless. Although accounted a desperate man, he could take a joke, and he declared that it was certainly on

him, to have a half-grown boy sit on his back for half an hour and more, tapping him on the head with a clump of wood every time he moved, and threatening dire things unless he stayed still.

That was a merry lunch, one none of the Outing Boys would soon forget. And afterwards the wardens took their prisoner away.

"What say, fellows, shall we head back to town now?" asked Max, when the party had vanished from their view.

"Might as well," declared Steve. "Seems like we've had about all the excitement that's good for us in one day. Gee, but that posky machine did carry me along like the wind! But in the end I found out how to stop her, didn't I, Max? It won't run away with Steve Dowdy again, let me tell you!"

"Went fast enough for once, then, did you, Steve?" asked Owen.

"Oh! I suppose so," was all the impetuous one would say in return.

Accordingly they turned their faces in the direction of Carson.

"Some fine day we'll come up in this region again," declared Max.

"That's right, we will," echoed Bandy-legs.

"Say, won't the folks stare when we tell 'em about what Toby did," remarked Steve, as he carefully examined his machine before attempting to mount; because he had come to feel a great amount of respect for it by now, after his recent experience.

“He’s sure a credit to the Outing Boys!” declared Max.

“So say we all of us,” Owen went on; “three cheers for Toby Jucklin!” and they made the timber echo with their shouts.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE LUCK OF TOBY JUCKLIN—*conclusion.*

“HOUSE looks all shut up like there’s nobody home, fellers!”

Bandy-legs it was who made this remark. It was on the day following that when the Outing Boys had made their first long run, and met with such surprising adventures on the way. Bandy-legs was accompanied by Max, Owen, and Steve; and besides the father of young Hastings was in the party.

The building they were approaching was an old one; and here the miserly Nathan Jucklin had lived for many years. Indications of neglect could be seen on every hand; for old Nathan would not expend a cent repairs if he could help it.

“Oh, that’s no sign,” declared Steve Dowdy. “Always did look like a haunted house. Reckon we’ll find the old man in, and I jus’ bet you he’s shut Toby up because he learned this morning down-town what’s been going on. Toby said he’d want him to sell his motorcycle and turn the money over to him, if ever he heard about how we found those pearls, and sold ’em for a big sum.”



"Well, come along, and we'll try the door," said Max, leading the way after his customary way.

"Locked," he added a minute later, after trying to push the door open.

"Say, what's the reason we can't open that window, and get in?" suggested Steve.

"You do it, Steve, and then come around and unlock the door," observed Max. "Go quiet-like, and make as little noise as you can. There's a train coming along so that rumble might deaden any ordinary racket. We'll wait for you by the door."

Max said this because he did not think his father would like to enter the house of the miser through a window. Old Nathan might later on think to take the law on the gentleman for such an unwarranted proceeding; but it was different stepping across a door sill.

Steve was apparently quite equal to the task he had set himself. Watching, they saw him deftly open the window, which perhaps the miser had neglected to properly secure that morning after throwing back the heavy wooden blinds. Then the agile boy vanished from view.

"He's in all right!" chuckled Bandy-legs. "And he did it pretty near as slick as I could have done. Steve's all right. And now I hear him unchaining the door. Gee! but how many more bolts does he have to shove back? Talk about your castle, this

old rookery of Nathan Jucklin's got 'em all beat a mile."

By the time Bandy-legs had delivered himself of all this, the door swung open, squeaking dismally as the rusty hinges called loudly for the oil the miser never would open his heart to buy.

"Keep still, now, for goodness' sake, Bandy-legs!" cautioned Max, as the little party passed into the ramshackle home of Nathan Jucklin.

It was a most desolate looking interior they saw, when compared with their own comfortable homes; and Max was more than ever determined that Toby should be given a chance to enjoy the good things of life. For Mr. Hastings had been down to the city, and brought back news with him that had cheered the hearts of Toby's comrades.

They caught the sound of a loud and raucous voice. Every fellow had heard old Nathan talk many a time, and had no difficulty in recognizing his rasping tones now, especially since they were inside his living place, wretched hovel that it was.

Without making any more noise than they could possibly help, the little party passed on until they were close to the apartment from which the sound of the voices came—for by now they had heard Toby's stammering tones in addition to those of his old relative.

"I'm your legally appointed gardeén," the miser was saying, harshly; "just remember that, boy, and

you've got to mind me. Everything you've got is in my charge, and precious little at that. But sech a sinful waste of good money I never heard before. The ijee of a boy havin' a motorcycle wuth, they tells me, a hundred and ninety or two hundred dollars, when I find it hard to git the money to buy the food you eat, and the clothes you put on your back!"

"Then w-w-why don't you let me g-g-go to work, and earn my own l-l-living?" the boy burst out. "I'd do it in a minute, too! I d-d-don't want to s-s-stay here in this old rat's nest another day 'f I c'n h-h-help it. I'm tired of being helf fed, and b-b-badgered all the time in the b-b-bargain. As for that motorcycle, 'tain't mine alone. B-b-belongs to the c-c-club, and they won't let you t-t-take it!" Toby was answering back.

"That will do to tell the marines," the old man jeered. "I got the hull story straight, and I knows that you was entitled to the full amount of one of them ere pearls. If so be they keep the motorcycle, I'll see that Mr. Hastings does the square thing, and hands over one of them pearls as hasn't been sold yet. I need the money to buy food, and keep you in clothes."

"Well, you won't get it, then!" exclaimed Toby, with a flash of determination in his manner; for what Max and Owen had been saying to him of late had caused him to pluck up new courage.

"That will do for you, Tobias," said the old man,



sternly. "Think because you jest sot on that ere 'scaped jailbird till the keepers came along, you c'n sass your legally app'inted gardeen, and the trustee of your father's mite of an estate. But if you dares to defy me I'll have to try some sterner measures. I knows my rights, boy, and I always keep the law behind me in whatever I do!"

"Well, this time, then, the law has caught up with you, Nathan Jucklin!" said Mr. Hastings, suddenly stepping into the room, followed by the four Outing Boys, all of them smiling broadly in the direction of the astonished Toby, whose face went white with sudden alarm, then turned rosy red with hope.

Nathan Jucklin, who was a small, sour-faced man, with ratty eyes, in which the word "miser" seemed to be indelibly stamped, hardly knew what to understand from this unexpected invasion of his premises.

"W-what's all this mean, neighbor, a-coming into my house in sech a unwarranted way? Why, I could have the law on you for trespass and breakin' in!" he managed to stammer, although from his manner, and the yellow color that had come upon his thin face, it was evident that he was hardly in a fighting mood; the presence of Mr. Hastings doubtless excited quite a lively fear in his guilty heart.

"Oh! I hardly think the law would call it trespassing, when I simply stepped in through an open door," said the gentleman, impressively. "But I



wanted to see you, Mr. Jucklin, to inform you that I have just come up from consulting my lawyer in the city. Together we have been looking over the recorded last will and testament of the late Mr. Ambrose Jucklin, and find that he left quite a little fortune in your charge, every penny of which was to go to his son, Tobias. And as one of the stipulations of your trusteeship was that you should allow the boy to have the benefit of the income of the estate and to give him a comfortable home, which you have surely failed to provide, I have already applied to the court to have you removed as his guardian, and another party in whom he will have full confidence, appointed."

Nathan Jucklin fell back into a chair, gasping for breath. His castles in the air had all come tumbling down in a heap, and he saw ruin before him; at least many of the plans he had been hugging to his heart would be swept away if he had to give a strict account of every dollar that had been left in trust for the son of his dead brother.

"You can't do it, Mr. Hastings!" he managed to cry finally. "He was left in my charge by my dying brother. I'm his only living relative, and every cent of his estate can be accounted for. Only I did hate to see it squandered foolishly. Money is too hard to get to let it slip away; and I wanted to hold on to it as long as I could. But he won't leave me, will you, Tobias? I'm your uncle, boy. Say you'll

stay with me, and let's try all over again! Blood's thicker than water, boy. Don't let 'em believe they can coax you to leave me!"

Mr. Hastings evidently had no faith in this sudden reformation on the part of the old miser. He knew that the habits of a lifetime are not to be easily changed; and evidently poor Toby had suffered these many years because of the money-worshiping nature of his relative, when all the time he was entitled to a comfortable home, and loving friends' company.

"Toby," he went on to say, quietly but earnestly, "the court told me to take you home, and keep you until this thing could be settled, and another guardian appointed. If Mr. Jucklin knows what is best for him he will make as little trouble as possible. A court is a hard customer to deal with, and it might be he would suffer from having failed to provide for you as he had been instructed to do. Will you go with Max and I, Toby?"

The boy looked from his miserable uncle to the kind faces of his friends. Who could hesitate, when for years he had never known a loving look or word under the roof of the miser?

"I'll go with you, Mr. Hastings!" he said, quickly, with a little shudder, as he contemplated all he was leaving behind with that decision.

Old Nathan groaned, but those who knew him best would readily understand that his emotion was caused by the prospect of being so soon separated

from all the money he held in trust for his nephew, and not because of any affection he entertained toward Toby.

And so they went out, and left him there in his squalor, a prey to remorse and fear, because he did not know what the court might do to him.

In good time, it might as well be stated here, the court appointed a gentleman in Carson, recommended by Mr. Hastings, as guardian to Toby Jucklin. When the old miser rendered his statement as manager of the estate it was found that he had accounted for every dollar. During these years, while Toby was growing up, deprived of nearly every comfort, there had been an abundance of interest to have given him all that his heart could have wished, but the miserly instincts of his uncle could not bear to see the money spent.

Of course the estate had doubled since the death of Toby's father. And because of that fact the court did not pursue the matter any further, since Nathan had not actually shown any intention of appropriating any of the trust funds.

All the other members of the Outing Boys Club rejoiced with Toby over his good fortune. But long before this was brought about in full, they had met with other surprising adventures that gave promise of really eclipsing any that had gone before. Doubtless the reader, being interested in the fortunes of the characters in this book, Max, Owen, Bandy-legs,

Steve and Toby, as well as the bully of Carson and his cronies, will be glad to see more of them in the next story, which will be found under the title of "The Strange Cabin on Catamount Island."

THE END.



# Boy Inventors' Series

The author knows these subjects from a practical standpoint. Each book is printed from new plates on a good quality of paper and bound in cloth. Each book wrapped in a jacket printed in colors.

*Price 60c each*

- 1....Boy Inventors' Wireless Triumph
- 2....Boy Inventors' and the Vanishing Sun
- 3....Boy Inventors' Diving Torpedo Set
- 4....Boy Inventors' Flying Ship
- 5....Boy Inventors' Electric Ship
- 6....Boy Inventors' Radio Telephone



## The "How-to-do-it" Books

These books teach the use of tools; how to sharpen them; to design and layout work. Printed from new plates and bound in cloth. Profusely illustrated. Each book is wrapped in a printed jacket.

*Price \$1.00 each*

- 1....Carpentry for Boys
- 2....Electricity for Boys
- 3....Practical Mechanics for Boys

*For Sale by all Book-sellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of the above price.*

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 · SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · CHICAGO

# UNCLE WIGGILY SERIES

By  
HOWARD R. GARIS

Four titles of these famous books, fifty-two stories in each. Printed from large, clear type on a superior quality of paper. Numerous illustrations and jacket printed in full colors. Bound in cloth.

*Price each \$1.00 Postpaid*

*Uncle Wiggily and Alice in Wonderland      Uncle Wiggily Longears*  
*Uncle Wiggily and Mother Goose      Uncle Wiggily's Arabian Nights*

# THOSE SMITH BOYS

By  
HOWARD R. GARIS

New and complete editions printed from new plates on a superior quality paper. Each book is wrapped in a special jacket printed in colors. Appropriately stamped and handsomely bound in cloth.

*Price each 60c Postpaid*

*Those Smith Boys      Those Smith Boys on the Diamond*

# THE DADDY SERIES

By  
HOWARD R. GARIS

Mr. Garis has won the hearts of little folks with his stories. Each is founded on animal lore and is told in simple language. Large, clear text. Special jacket printed in colors. Bound in clothene.

*Price each 35c Postpaid*

<i>Daddy Takes Us Camping</i>	<i>Daddy Takes Us Hunting Flowers</i>
<i>Daddy Takes Us Fishing</i>	<i>Daddy Takes Us Hunting Birds</i>
<i>Daddy Takes Us to the Circus</i>	<i>Daddy Takes Us to the Woods</i>
<i>Daddy Takes Us Skating</i>	<i>Daddy Takes Us to the Farm</i>
<i>Daddy Takes Us Coasting</i>	<i>Daddy Takes Us to the Garden</i>

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 · SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · CHICAGO

# FURRY FOLK STORIES

By  
JANE FIELDING

A series of life tales of our four-footed friends, as related by the animals. These stories are entertaining and pleasing to the young and old alike. Bound in cloth and illustrated. Colored wrapper.

*Price each 50 cents postpaid*

- 1....Bear Brownie.....*The Life of a Bear*
- 2....Jackie Hightree.....*Adventures of a Squirrel*
- 3....Kitty Purrpuss.....*The Memoir of a Cat*
- 4....Master Reynard.....*The History of a Fox*
- 5....Scamp.....*A Dog's Own Story*
- 6....Wee Willie Mousie.*Life from his own Viewpoint*

# THE JINGLE BOOK

By  
CAROLYN WELLS

*Price each 60 cents postpaid*

A popular book of Jingles by this well-known writer. A comic illustration on every page. Bound in cloth and beautifully stamped in colors. Each is book wrapped in a jacket printed in colors.

# LET'S MAKE BELIEVE STORIES

By  
LILIAN T. GARIS

Delightful and fascinating stories; printed from large, clear type on a superior quality of paper, Frontispiece and jacket printed in full colors. Bound in cloth and stamped from appropriate dies.

*Price each 50 cents postpaid*

- 1....Let's Make Believe We're Keeping House
- 2....Lets Play Circus
- 3....Let's Make Believe We're Soldiers

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 · SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · CHICAGO

# Radio Boys Series

1. Radio Boys in the Secret Service; or, Cast Away on an Iceberg .....FRANK HONEYWELL
2. Radio Boys on the Thousand Islands; or, The Yankee Canadian Wireless Trail..FRANK HONEYWELL
3. Radio Boys in the Flying Service; or, Held for Ransom by Mexican Bandits.....J. W. DUFFIELD
4. Radio Boys Under the Sea; or, The Hunt for the Sunken Treasure.....J. W. DUFFIELD
5. Radio Boys Cronies; or, Bill Brown's Radio .....  
..... WAYNE WHIPPLE
6. Radio Boys Loyalty; or, Bill Brown Listens In.....  
..... WAYNE WHIPPLE

---

## Peggy Parson's Series

By ANNABEL SHARP

A popular and charming series of Girl's books dealing in an interesting and fascinating manner with the the life and adventures of Girlhood so dear to all Girls from eight to fourteen years of age. Printed from large clear type on superior quality paper, multicolor jacket. Bound in cloth.

1. Peggy Parson Hampton Freshman
2. Peggy Parson at Prep School

---

*For sale by all booksellers or sent postpaid on receipt of 75c.*

---

M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY  
701-733 S. DEARBORN STREET                   .:                   CHICAGO



# VICTORY BOY SCOUT SERIES

Stories by a writer who possesses a thorough knowledge of this subject. Handsomely bound in cloth; colored jacket wrapper.

- <sup>1</sup>  
The Campfires of the Wolf Patrol
- <sup>2</sup>  
Woodcraft; or, How a Patrol Leader Made Good
- <sup>3</sup>  
Pathfinder; or, the Missing Tenderfoot
- <sup>4</sup>  
Great Hike; or, The Pride of Khaki Troop
- <sup>5</sup>  
Endurance Test; or, How Clear Grit Won the Day
- <sup>6</sup>  
Under Canvas; or, the Search for the Carteret Ghost
- <sup>7</sup>  
Storm-bound; or, a Vacation among the Snow Drifts
- <sup>8</sup>  
Afloat; or, Adventures on Watery Trails
- <sup>9</sup>  
Tenderfoot Squad; or, Camping at Raccoon Bluff
- <sup>10</sup>  
Boy Scouts in an Airship
- <sup>11</sup>  
Boy Scout Electricians; or, the Hidden Dynamo
- <sup>12</sup>  
Boy Scouts on Open Plains

*For Sale by all Book-sellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of 40 cents*

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · CHICAGO

# BOYS BANNER SERIES

A desirable assortment of books for boys, by standard and favorite authors. Each title is complete and unabridged. Printed on a good quality of paper from large, clear type. Beautifully bound in cloth. Each book is wrapped in a special multi-colored jacket.

- 1..Afloat on the Flood.....Leslie
- 2..At Whispering Pine Lodge.....Leslie
- 3..Chums of the Campfire.....Leslie
- 4..In School and Out.....Optic
- 5..Jack Winter's Baseball Team.....Overton
- 6..Jack Winter's Campmates.....Overton
- 7..Jack Winter's Gridiron Chums.....Overton
- 8..Jack Winter's Iceboat Wonder.....Overton
- 9..Little by Little.....Optic
- 10..Motor Boat Boys Mississippi Cruise....Arundel
- 11..Now or Never.....Optic
- 12..Phil Bradley's Mountain Boys.....Boone
- 13..Phil Bradley's Winning Way.....Boone
- 14..Radio Boys' Cronies.....Whipple
- 15..Radio Boys Loyalty.....Whipple
- 16..Rivals of the Trail.....Leslie
- 17..Trip Around the World in a Flying Machine Verne
- 18..Two years Before the Mast.....Dana

*For Sale by all Book-sellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of 40 cents*

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 · SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · CHICAGO

# THE BOYS' ELITE SERIES

*12mo, cloth. Price 75c each.*

Contains an attractive assortment of books for boys by standard and favorite authors. Printed from large, clear type on a superior quality of paper, bound in a superior quality of binders' cloth, ornamented with illustrated original designs on covers stamped in colors from unique and appropriate dies. Each book wrapped in attractive jacket.

1. Cudjo's Cave.....Trowbridge
2. Green Mountain Boys.....
3. Life of Kit Carson.....Edward L. Ellis
4. Tom Westlake's Golden Luck.....Perry Newberry
5. Tony Keating's Surprises.....Mrs. G. R. Alden (Pansy)
6. Tour of the World in 80 Days.....Jules Verne

# THE GIRLS' ELITE SERIES

*12mo, cloth. Price 75c each.*

Contains an assortment of attractive and desirable books for girls by standard and favorite authors. The books are printed on a good quality of paper in large clear type. Each title is complete and unabridged. Bound in clothene, ornamented on the sides and back with attractive illustrative designs and the title stamped on front and back.

1. Bee and the Butterfly.....Lucy Foster Madison
2. Dixie School Girl.....Gabrielle E. Jackson
3. Girls of Mount Morris.....Amanda Douglas
4. Hope's Messenger.....Gabrielle E. Jackson
5. The Little Aunt.....Marion Ames Taggart
6. A Modern Cinderella.....Amanda Douglas

---

*For sale by all Booksellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of 75c*

---

**M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY**

**711 S. DEARBORN STREET**

**::**

**CHICAGO**

# The Aeroplane Series

By JOHN LUTHER LANGWORTHY

1. The Aeroplane Boys; or, The Young Pilots First Air Voyage
  2. The Aeroplane Boys on the Wing; or, Aeroplane Chums in the Tropics
  3. The Aeroplane Boys Among the Clouds; or, Young Aviators in a Wreck
  4. The Aeroplane Boys' Flights; or, A Hydroplane Round-up
  5. The Aeroplane Boys on a Cattle Ranch
- 

# The Girl Aviator Series

By MARGARET BURNHAM

Just the type of books that delight and fascinate the wide awake Girls of the present day who are between the ages of eight and fourteen years. The great author of these books regards them as the best products of her pen. Printed from large clear type on a superior quality of paper; attractive multi-color jacket wrapper around each book. Bound in cloth.

1. The Girl Aviators and the Phantom Airship
2. The Girl Aviators on Golden Wings
3. The Girl Aviators' Sky Cruise
4. The Girl Aviators' Motor Butterfly.

---

*For sale by all booksellers or sent postpaid on receipt of 75c.*

---

M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY  
701-733 S. DEARBORN STREET                    ::                    CHICAGO



# BOY SCOUT SERIES

By  
G. HARVEY RALPHSON

Just the type of books that delight and fascinate the wide awake boys of today. Clean, wholesome and interesting; full of mystery and adventure. Each title is complete and unabridged. Printed on a good quality of paper from large, clear type and bound in cloth. Each book is wrapped in a special multi-colored jacket.

- 1 . . . . Boy Scouts in Mexico; or, On Guard with Uncle Sam
- 2 . . . . Boy Scouts in the Canal Zone; or, the Plot against Uncle Sam
- 3 . . . . Boy Scouts in the Philippines; or, the Key to the Treaty Box
- 4 . . . . Boy Scouts in the Northwest; or, Fighting Forest Fires
- 5 . . . . Boy Scouts in a Motor Boat; or Adventures on Columbia River
- 6 . . . . Boy Scouts in an Airship; or, the Warning from the Sky
- 7 . . . . Boy Scouts in a Submarine; or, Searching an Ocean Floor
- 8 . . . . Boy Scouts on Motorcycles; or, With the Flying Squadron
- 9 . . . . Boy Scouts beyond the Arctic Circle; or, the Lost Expedition
- 10 . . . . Boy Scout Camera Club; or, the Confessions of a Photograph
- 11 . . . . Boy Scout Electricians; or, the Hidden Dynamo
- 12 . . . . Boy Scouts in California; or, the Flag on the Cliff
- 13 . . . . Boy Scouts on Hudson Bay; or, the Disappearing Fleet
- 14 . . . . Boy Scouts in Death Valley; or, the City in the Sky
- 15 . . . . Boy Scouts on Open Plains; or, the Roundup not Ordered
- 16 . . . . Boy Scouts in Southern Waters; or the Spanish Treasure Chest
- 17 . . . . Boy Scouts in Belgium; or, Imperiled in a Trap
- 18 . . . . Boy Scouts in the North Sea; or, the Mystery of a Sub
- 19 . . . . Boy Scouts Mysterious Signal or Perils of the Black Bear Patrol
- 20 . . . . Boy Scouts with the Cossacks; or, a Guilty Secret

*For Sale by all Book-sellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of 60 cents*

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 · SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · CHICAGO

# Special Standard 12mos

*Bound in cloth. Jacket printed in colors*

An Old Fashioned Girl.....	Louisa May Alcott
Black Beauty.....	Anna Sewell
Children of the Abbey.....	Roche
Child's History of England.....	Charles Dickens
Christmas Stories.....	Charles Dickens
Dog of Flanders, A.....	Ouida
East Lynne.....	Mrs. Henry Wood
Elsie Dinsmore.....	Martha Finley
Hans Brinker.....	Mary Mapes Dodge
Heidi.....	Johanna Spyri
Helen's Babies.....	John Habberton
Ishmael.....	E. D. E. N. Southworth
Island of Appledore.....	Aldon
Ivanhoe.....	Sir Walter Scott
Kidnapped.....	Robert Louis Stevenson
King Arthur and His Knights.....	Retold
Last Days of Pompeii.....	Lytton
Life of Kit Carson.....	Edward S. Ellis
Little King, The.....	Charles Major
Little Lame Prince.....	Miss Mulock
Little Minister, The.....	J. M. Barrie
Little Men.....	Louisa May Alcott
Little Women.....	Louisa May Alcott
Oliver Twist.....	Charles Dickens
Pilgrim's Progress.....	John Bunyan
Pinocchio.....	C. Collodi
Prince of the House of David.....	Rev. J. H. Ingraham
Robin Hood.....	Retold
Robinson Crusoe.....	Daniel DeFoe
Self Raised.....	E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sketch Book.....	Washington Irving
St. Elmo.....	Augusta J. Evans-Wilson
Swiss Family Robinson.....	Wyss
Tale of Two Cities.....	Charles Dickens
Three Musketeers, The.....	Alexander Dumas
Tom Brown at Oxford.....	Thomas Hughes
Tom Brown's School Days.....	Thomas Hughes
Treasure Island.....	Robert Louis Stevenson
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.....	Jules Verne
Twenty Years After.....	Alexander Dumas
Uncle Tom's Cabin.....	Harriet Beecher Stowe
Under Two Flags.....	Ouida

*For Sale by all Book-sellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of 60 cents*

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 · SOUTH · DEARBORN · STREET · · · CHICAGO

# THE EDWARD S. ELLIS SERIES

---

## STORIES OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN; MYSTERY, ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE

Every red blooded American Boy and Girl will be greatly pleased with these books. They are written by the master writer of such books, EDWARD S. ELLIS. There is mystery, charm and excitement in each volume. All the following titles can be procured at the same place this book was procured, or they will be sent post-paid for 25c per copy or 5 for \$1.00.

Astray in the Forest  
River and Forest  
Lost in the Rockies  
Bear Cavern  
The Lost River

Boy Hunters in Kentucky  
The Daughter of the Chieftain  
Captured by the Indians  
Princess of the Woods  
Wolf Ear: The Indian

*Read every one of the above Titles*

*You will enjoy them*

---

M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY

*Manufacturers and Publishers Since 1861*

701-733 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET

CHICAGO



**ALWAYS** *ASK FOR THE* **DONOHUE**  
COMPLETE EDITIONS — THE BEST FOR LEAST MONEY

# WOODCRAFT

*for Boy Scouts and Others*

*By* **OWEN JONES** *and* **MARCUS WOODMAN**  
*With a Message to Boy Scouts by* **SIR BADEN-  
POWELL**, *Founder of the Boy Scouts' Movement.*

---

**O**NE of the essential requirements of the Boy Scout training is a Knowledge of Woodcraft. This necessitates a book embracing all the subjects and treating on all the topics that a thorough knowledge of Woodcraft implies.

This book thoroughly exhausts the subject. It imparts a comprehensive knowledge of woods from fungus growth to the most stately monarch of the forest; it treats of the habits and lairs of all the feathered and furry inhabitants of the woods. Shows how to trail wild animals; how to identify birds and beasts by their tracks, calls, etc. Tells how to forecast the weather, and in fact treats on every phase of nature with which a Boy Scout or any woodman or lover of nature should be familiar. The authorship guarantees its authenticity and reliability. Indispensable to "Boy Scouts" and others. Printed from large clear type on superior paper.

**Embellished With Over 100 Thumb Nail  
Illustrations Taken From Life**

Bound in Cloth. Stamped with unique and  
appropriate designs in ink.

Price, **75C** Postpaid

**M. A. DONOHUE & CO.**

**701 - 727 S. Dearborn St.**

**CHICAGO**



# KENMORE SERIES

## NEW EDITIONS OF FAMOUS BOOKS

**T**HE KENMORE SERIES is composed of select titles by famous authors of boys and girls books. Printed from new plates on a high quality paper. Four illustrations, inlay and wrapper of each book printed in full colors. Cloth-bound and stamped from unique dies.

An Old Fashioned Girl	. Louisa May Alcott
Black Beauty	. . . . . Anna Sewell
Elsie Dinsmore	. . . . . Martha Finley
Heidi	. . . . . Johanna Spyri
King Arthur	. . . . . Retold
Little Lame Prince	. . . . . Miss Mulock
Little Men	. . . . . Louisa May Alcott
Little Women	. . . . . Louisa May Alcott
Pinocchio	. . . . . C. Collodi
Robin Hood	. . . . . Retold
Storyland Gems for Little Folks	Winnington
Treasure Island	. . . Robert Louis Stevenson

*For sale by all Booksellers, or sent postpaid  
upon receipt of \$1.25*

M · A · DONOHUE · & · COMPANY  
711 SOUTH DEARBORN STREET · CHICAGO

# CALUMET SERIES

## of POPULAR COPYRIGHTS

Apaches of New York .....	Alfred Henry Lewis
Arsene Lupin, Gentleman Burglar ...	Maurice Leblanc
Battle, The .....	Cleveland Moffett
Black Motor Car, The .....	Harris Burland
Captain Love .....	Theodore Roberts
Cavalier of Virginia, A .....	Theodore Roberts
Champion, The .....	John Collin Dane
Comrades of Peril .....	Randall Parrish
Devil, The .....	Van Westrum
Dr. Nicholas Stone .....	E. Spence DePue
Devils Own, The .....	Randall Parrish
End of the Game, The .....	Arthur Hornblow
Every Man His Price .....	Max Rittenberg
Garrison's Finish .....	W. B. M. Ferguson
Harbor Master, The .....	Theodore Roberts
King of the Camorra .....	E. Serav
Land of the Frozen Suns .....	Bertrand W. Sinclair
Little Grey Girl .....	Mary Openshaw
Master of Fortune .....	Cutcliffe Hyne
New England Folks .....	Eugene W. Presbrey
Night Winds Promise .....	Varick Vanardy
Red Nights of Paris .....	Goron
Return of the Night Wind .....	Varick Vanardy
True Detective Stories .....	A. L. Drummond
Watch-Dog, The .....	Arthur Hornblow

*For sale by all booksellers or sent postpaid on receipt of 50c.*

**M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY**  
701-733 S. DEARBORN STREET                      ::                      CHICAGO









